


# In Every Good Work

A History of First Baptist Church  
Greensboro, North Carolina

1850 **150** YEARS 2000

Scott P. Culclasure



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In Every Good Work

“And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make us perfect in every good work.”

—From the original Church Covenant, March 13, 1859

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Baptist History and Heritage Society  
Atlanta, Georgia

Fields Publishing, Inc.  
Nashville, Tennessee

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by members who gave generously to support this project as part of  
the church's sesquicentennial celebration.

## Preface

The correspondent was direct and to the point: “A friend informed me that she has seen a copy of the history of the Greensboro church and was amazed to find that my mother’s name had not been mentioned.” Jessie Yarborough Garland, the writer, had a point; her mother was an active member of the early Baptist church in Greensboro. In her letter of October 31, 1930, Mrs. Garland made clear to First Baptist pastor J. Clyde Turner that she was not happy. “My sainted mother has gone to her reward many years ago but I cannot be satisfied to have had her work so utterly forgotten.”

Garland was complaining about a history published in 1926 by Dr. Walter Wheat Rowe, a stalwart of the church who apparently undertook to write the small book on his own initiative. Some thanks he got! Fortunately, I have not repeated his omission. But that thought holds little comfort when I consider how many other stories have been left out of the narrative that follows. This has been particularly worrisome when writing about the events of the recent past whose participants sit with me in the pews on Sunday mornings. Apologizing beforehand may be bad form, but I herein offer my sincerest for inadvertently neglecting strands of the church’s history that another writer might have more thoughtfully considered.

Nevertheless, selection is the nature of history, which, by definition, must choose to tell of those things about the past that the narrator considers most revealing. What has struck me most about the story of First Baptist Church of Greensboro is how it has been filled with individuals, both lay leaders and pastors, who were determined to make the Baptist presence in this community real, permanent, and a cause for righteousness as they understood it. Remembering at least a few of who they were and what they did is one way of acknowledging the continuing presence of what the author of Hebrews calls that great “cloud of witnesses.” If their work lacked completion, so much the better for us, who sometimes confuse perfection with persistence. For the stories left untold, I am reminded that Rowe’s history was supplanted by Turner’s, and the present new one enjoys no greater guarantee of permanence.

A word about how this work is documented. By training I could not rest comfortably knowing that sources used in my research might pass by without being cited. Indeed, one of the most aggravating aspects of this project has been trying

to determine where early writers came by their information. At the same time few things vex general readers more quickly than scholarly appurtenances like a text crammed with endnote numbers. So I have struck a middle ground. Sources other than church minutes, bulletins, and newsletters (which are usually denoted in the text by their date) are acknowledged in endnotes that are keyed to the text with page numbers and short quotations for those interested in seeking them out. Endnote numbers do not appear in the text itself so that the reader who does not wish to be burdened with the historian's chatter need not worry.

Two earlier church histories precede this one, and I would have been lost without their guidance: Walter Wheat Rowe's *The History of the Baptists of Greensboro, NC* (1926) and J. Clyde Turner's *A Century of Service* (1959). Dr. Rowe, a pioneering dentist in town, served many years as church clerk and at the time of his death was the church's senior deacon, and Dr. Turner's pastorate of over thirty-seven years has become the stuff of legend. Behind their work are other, earlier historical sketches, the sum of which at first blush makes the appearance of a new history seem presumptuous.

Nevertheless, each generation writes its own history, which means more than simply chronicling events. Our perspectives are different from those of our forebearers. Moreover, older histories resist our efforts to read between the lines. No longer do we share with Dr. Rowe a sense of bereavement over the death of Pastor J. B. Richardson, who, in his own historical sketch, remembered preaching to a gathering of only three people when he arrived in 1871. And Dr. Turner's memory of the *annus mirabilis* of 1951, when the laying of the new church's cornerstone was followed by the launching of Billy Graham's Greensboro Crusade (and the year's addition of 428 new members) is of another era.

Seeing farther, however, means perching in a steeple built by others; and, in addition to the older histories, this work relies on a host of people who willingly, ceaselessly, and cheerfully offered their help. First on my list are the members of the church's history committee. They are organized by the senior adult council and led by Dr. Lois Edinger. This committee is dedicated to gathering and (best of all) organizing the many church records and memorabilia still extant. Without the efforts of committee members Kay Crawford, Ernie Ohlson, Eleanor Patterson, and Charte Plyler, and the cataloging done by computer guru Jack Swanson, I would not have known where to begin. In recent years the committee, owing to the efforts of Laura Anderton, Bob Caldwell, Ernest Ferris, Lois Pritchard, Virginia Simpson, Moody Stroud, Marvin Sykes, and Margaret Wilson, in consultation with S. C. Ray and with the problem-solving assistance of Marty and Rosemary Kellam and church administrator Tom Smith, has organized a heritage room at the church which displays many of the artifacts collected over the years. Groundwork for the present effort was laid by an earlier committee organized in 1975 and composed

of Alice Straughan, chair, Dr. W. O. Beavers, Robert Farley, and Gladys York, with Sandra Canipe serving as historian.

Margaret Wilson, whose roots in the church run deep, helped me understand many things that otherwise would have been indecipherable. Her memories were among the most vivid I heard. Unfortunately, discretion prohibited committing much of what she had to say to print!

Members of the church support staff generously offered their assistance when they had other work to do, whether it was opening the vault, tracking down a photograph, or searching out materials that had been secreted away and nearly forgotten; media director, Kelly Stephens was particularly helpful in combing through the church's recent photograph files to find the best images of the church at work today. The same was true of the members of the ministerial staff, for whom no question was too trivial to be patiently answered with the assurance of providing additional help if needed. All of them without exception are reminders of how alive and exciting the church is today.

For a time the Z. Smith Reynolds Library Special Collection and Archives at Wake Forest University was like a second home. Julia Bradford, coordinator of the North Carolina Baptist Historical Collection, and Vicki Johnson, archives librarian, were always eager to find me a place in their crowded offices to study the records they always managed to find. Sharon Snow, director of the rare books collection, made clear from my first exploratory visit that the staff was prepared to help in any way it could.

Nathan Finn graciously invited me to the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary Library in Wake Forest, where Bill Youngmark helped me navigate the J. Clyde Turner Papers, particularly his sermons, which Craig Freeman had recently inventoried. Jim Lutzweiler also shared with me Turner letters I would have otherwise missed.

At the Greensboro Historical Museum, Stephen Catlett and Linda Evans answered questions and gathered materials they thought might be helpful.

Phyllis Kelly is the volunteer historian for College Park Baptist Church, one of the early missions of First Baptist. We spent a summer morning pouring through her church's records, and Phyllis helped to secure illustrations of her church when it was located on Forest Avenue. Eric Porterfield, pastor of Winter Park Baptist Church in Wilmington, North Carolina, and a family friend for many years, shared with me copies of the Turner sermons he used in his research at Duke Divinity School.

Mel Steele of Vermilion Studios in Reidsville, North Carolina, gave permission to include his illustration of the old Madison Baptist Church. Charles Hartis brought to church more photographic equipment than I thought existed to make the wonderful images of surviving furnishings used in the church's early years. Summer youth intern Lesley-Ann Hix also freely shared her photographic work

from the youth choir mission trip to Boston in the summer of 2008. The image of the newly renovated sanctuary and organ was made available by Timothy Mann, vice-president, Marketing, of the Schantz Organ Company. Church members too numerous to list readily answered questions, identified photographs, offered helpful suggestions, and always shared their enthusiasm for this project.

I benefited greatly from a committee of three readers whose wise counsel shaped the entire process from conception to execution: Pastor Ken Massey, Associate Pastor Steve Pressley, and Lois Edinger. While their close reading helped me avoid many grammatical infelicities and missteps (whatever clunkers and howlers that remain are solely my own), what was most meaningful to me was their steady encouragement during our three years of work together.

Charles Dewese and Pam Durso of the Baptist Heritage and History Society guided me through the process of preparing and editing the book. Publisher Tim Fields graciously accommodated every request as he further edited and subsequently transformed the manuscript into a book.

Researching and writing are fun, but, to borrow from Duke Ellington, "It don't mean a thing" if not published in a fashion that can be shared with others. The selfless donors who underwrote the cost of publishing this history helped to make the church's sesquicentennial celebration a Baptist event in the best way by making the book freely available to the congregation.

Twice in these first pages I have mentioned the name of Lois Edinger. She has been the inspiration and driving force for this project. For more years than either of us need to count, she has been my teacher, my graduate school advisor, my mentor, and my friend.

An author with a family understands how indebted he is to those closest to him. My wife, Nancy, who long ago tempted me into the Baptist camp, has been long suffering in her willingness to allow me to pursue this project when the house really needed painting. Our children have also been supportive: Alice did not seem to mind being seen with her father when he suddenly showed up at Wake Forest, where she is a student; and David appeared to enjoy his first taste of historical research as he browsed through microfilm of old newspapers.

For a significant chunk of the church's early history, twenty-seven years, between 1873 and 1899, the work of the church was documented by only two clerks: Robert L. Vernon and Walter W. Rowe. To them and to the many others who have helped keep the records over the years, I acknowledge my gratefulness that Baptists who depend on congregational governance are predisposed to be good record keepers.

I cannot think of a more appropriate dedication than to the members of First Baptist Church of Greensboro, whose hope, through the God of peace, is to be made perfect in every good work.

## Introduction

The story is repeated so often in earlier histories, beginning with Dr. Rowe's 1926 account, that it would be almost blasphemous not to retell it here.

When the Rev. William Denny Paisley, longtime pastor of the Eno and Hawfield Presbyterian churches and a graduate of David Caldwell's Log College, came to the village of Greensborough (as it was then spelled) in 1819 to take charge as principal of the fledgling Greensborough Academy, he was stunned to find only one professing Christian among the twenty families he encountered. He found Major Jones Johnson, and he was a Baptist.

A short story it is, with no indication of who Johnson was. However, the missionary Elias Dodson, who many years later was instrumental in the formation of a Baptist congregation in Greensboro, perhaps offers a clue in a leather-bound pocket notebook he kept. On an undated page written sometime near the end of 1846, Dodson recorded a few biographical details of a "Brother Johnson." According to his notes, Johnson was born in Guilford County two miles north of Martinville (the name of the county seat that grew up around the original court house) on August 26, 1773. He professed his faith in August 1801 and "remained in the Presbyterian Church 2 or 3 years under Doctor Caldwell. He then joined the Baptist Church." He was a merchant until about 1826 and continued to keep store for various persons until a few years before Dodson met him. During his career Johnson also served as postmaster (in those days a part-time job often performed by a storekeeper), including postmaster in Greensborough from 1815 to 1823. He had been postmaster in Wentworth, Rockingham County, North Carolina, for another eight years.

Even with Dodson's notes, there are gaps and inconsistencies in what we know. For example, Dodson, unlike Rowe, does not provide Johnson's given name, but the first postmaster of Greensboro was named "James," not "Jones," Johnson, the latter being the name recorded by Rowe (although the garbling of given names in the historical record is not uncommon and only "James" appears in the 1820 federal census for Guilford County). Furthermore, Rowe, unlike Dodson, does not tell us what Johnson's occupation was, although it seems likely he was a man of distinction to be recognized with the title of

“Major” and by Paisley as the only Christian in town.

Suppose, however, that Dodson and Rowe are referring to the same individual. In that case what we can know is fascinating. From what Dodson tells us, Johnson was an early citizen to be born in Guilford County, which was constituted in 1771. His birth near Martinville two years later meant that as a child he may have heard the musketry and cannonading of British and American soldiers who fought in 1781 in the fields and woods surrounding the courthouse. Johnson’s conversion in 1801 placed him among countless souls swept up in the Great Revival, which men like the elder David Caldwell and young William Paisley worked so hard to initiate. As a Presbyterian under Caldwell’s pastorate, Johnson likely attended worship at Buffalo Presbyterian Church.

Yet for the questions we most want answered, Dodson offers no help. Why did Johnson change denominations? Where did he join as a Baptist? If he is the same Johnson as the one who is described in the story about Paisley’s arrival in town, did Paisley already know Johnson and recognize him?

If Brother Johnson wanted to be part of a congregation of other Baptists, he would have found none in Greensboro, not then and not for some years afterward. In Piedmont North Carolina, the excitable “holy whine” of preachers like the pioneering Shubal Stearns, whose Sandy Creek Baptist Association was organized in 1755, was the province of backcountry farmers and not townspeople. It would require the call of another generation of Baptist voices to take the gospel to the Piedmont’s growing towns.

The passage of time has left us with fragments too scattered to know much more about the story of Brother Johnson. To varying degrees this is always the case with understanding the past and the reason imagination is an important part of history. Few of the individual stories in this history of First Baptist Church of Greensboro are complete, but, taken together, they create an astounding picture of the determined faithful, sometimes only a few in number, who across many years were determined to live out in this community their understanding of Baptist life through their example, their service, and their missions. In the best way this story is also incomplete because today’s church, the inheritor of such a rich tradition, continues to build on this work.



# 1

## This Little Flock

*It is expected that several additions to the little flock will soon be made.*

—N. J. Palmer, 1847

On January 13, 1855, steam whistles announced to Greensboro's cheering crowds the arrival of two locomotives as the North Carolina Railroad—the state's first railroad north of Charlotte and west of Raleigh—neared completion. According to the *Greensboro Patriot*, “The arrival of the train was hailed by an almost unanimous concourse of the inhabitants of the town, old and young, great and small, male and female, white, black, including all the rest of mankind who sojourn here, besides not a few from the surrounding country.”

Although the editor of the *Patriot* declared that the railroad heralded a new age for Greensboro, he probably did not foresee that its arrival would coincide with the planting of a Baptist congregation in town. Indeed, several of the earliest members of the church worked for the railroad. While the tracks followed a route that backers hoped would generate a profitable traffic, Baptists in the state had at the same time begun to push their evangelistic efforts further west into the Piedmont's population centers.

Greensboro was a small, yet bustling town when it first attracted the attention of Baptists. In a letter that appeared in the *Biblical Recorder* of October 23, 1847, Nathaniel Jones Palmer, Caswell County lawyer and clerk of the Beulah Baptist Association, visited and observed a “thriving, enterprising town with a population of two thousand or more” (an estimate that was probably too high). Palmer found “flourishing schools” and, among other, smaller industries, a carriage factory and steam-powered cotton mill. As he entered the town along Market Street, however, the building that first caught his eye was the Methodists' Greensboro Female College, “a large well finished and handsome three story brick building situated on a beautiful and commanding eminence.” Looking up the hill, Palmer wondered

when North Carolina Baptists would “profit by the laudable and praise-worthy example of our Methodist brethren” and establish a similar institution.

But, it was a Presbyterian minister whom Palmer singled out by name in his letter: “the venerated and much loved pastor” of the Presbyterian church in town, William D. Paisley. Palmer remembered with fondness the “halcyon days” of his boyhood when he had been a member of Paisley’s Bible class. Although “this pious and devoted servant of God” continued to preach on occasion, the correspondent found Paisley, at age seventy-seven, retired from the church he had helped establish a generation earlier and now enjoying the respect accorded to someone who had outlived most of his early contemporaries.

The clerk of the Beulah Baptist Association must have recognized that, compared to the Presbyterians and Methodists (and Quakers and Germans Lutherans, who lived mostly in the surrounding countryside), Baptists were latecomers to Greensboro. Nevertheless, they were present, if only in small numbers, as Palmer noted. Earlier in 1847, the Domestic (later Home) Mission Board of the Baptist State Convention in Raleigh appointed the Rev. Joshua John James of Caswell County to serve as missionary to Greensboro, where, as Palmer noted in his letter, he had been “well received by the few Baptist brethren and sisters, and friends of our denomination.” James preached in the courthouse and, with monthly visits and the assistance of fellow elders who passed through town, enjoyed good congregations and “a flourishing Sabbath School.” Indeed, Palmer concluded, “It is expected that several additions to the little flock will soon be made by experience and Baptism, and with the blessing of God attending the labors of our devoted missionary, we may indulge the hope that ere long a respectable church will grow up in Greensborough.” What Palmer did not realize was that few things would come easily to this early congregation of Baptists. Many years would pass before a sustainable church took root in the town.

Not long before Palmer’s visit, the *Biblical Recorder* printed another letter from Greensboro, this one by Brother James himself and written in the hope of procuring a donation of “\$5 or \$10 worth of suitable books” from the convention’s Sunday School and Publication Society. James was pleased with the progress that had been made here, and he was satisfied that the missionary work of his colleagues had ensured that the budding congregation possessed a true missionary spirit and a desire for suitably educated ministers of the gospel—two areas of controversy for many early Baptists:

My labours in Greensboro have been better received than I had any right to expect; the attendance has been respectable ever since I commenced. My congregation has been gradually increasing: Yesterday it

was larger than it has been before, last night [Friday] the House was tightly crowded. Since I commenced I have attended regularly once a month, preached 14 sermons, attending 5 prayer meetings, delivered 5 Lectures, and established a Sunday School.”

Even if some in attendance were no more than casual onlookers curious about how Baptists behaved, James seems to have tapped a desire for Baptist ways in town. James received \$50 from the convention’s board of managers for preaching once a month in Greensboro. As Livingston Johnson, the recording secretary for the Baptist State Convention in the first part of the twentieth century (and a former pastor of Greensboro’s First Baptist Church), observed, “The importance of doing a more permanent work has evidently gotten hold of the minds of the brethren. While they do some evangelistic work, we shall see that more and more they are concentrating their efforts on certain important points.”

One of the missionaries most responsible, as James stated in his letter, for “disseminating the truth and in establishing new places of interest” has a greater claim to be associated with organizing a congregation in Greensboro than any other: the indefatigable church builder Elias Dodson. Like many of the early Baptists who labored in Greensboro, Dodson was a Virginian by birth, having graduated from the Richmond Baptist Seminary and, in 1838, the College of William and Mary. After moving to North Carolina, he served as a trustee of Wake Forest College where, according to historian George Washington Paschal, “none showed more interest or labored more steadily to free it from debt” in the school’s early years.

Unmarried during his long life, Dodson was a colorful character. A surviving photograph reveals lightly colored eyes and an intense gaze, which, with his “red face, long nose, wig (color of brick dust), sepulchral voice, and odd clothes,” suggested a commanding presence. Edwin McNeill Poteat (later president of Furman University and brother of future Wake Forest president William Louis Poteat) of Caswell County, North Carolina, recalled a sermon Dodson preached at Yanceyville Baptist Church when Poteat was eighteen: “Without the Shedding of Blood There Is No Remission.” According to Poteat, “I do not remember anything he said, but I do remember that I put my head down behind the pew and wept like a child. I incline to think that that sermon put a tinge of red in my thinking from that day to this.” Dodson preached tirelessly across the Piedmont and on at least one occasion even attracted the attention of a Moravian minister in nearby Bethania who noted an evening sermon on the text, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Marantha” (1 Cor. 16:22).

When the Beulah Baptist Association (which encompassed churches located generally to the north of Guilford County and from which Baptists in Greens-

boro would draw much strength) met in its annual session in the summer of 1846, delegates instructed the association's home missionary to labor chiefly in those counties that were "destitute of all the means of having the Gospel," with Guilford singled out as one of the most needy. In Elias Dodson, appointed by the delegates as the association's missionary, they had a man who would work unceasingly in the cause. During the next five years, Dodson made the mission station at Greensboro one of his primary concerns.

In fact, in 1845 Dodson already had called for help from neighboring associations, perhaps even from Shubal Stearns's old Sandy Creek Association, to supply pastors to work this "destitute region." Not long afterward Dodson also pleaded to the

convention for help, observing that the only Baptist church in the county "of our order" was in Jamestown and, with only nine members, it had no pastor. Dodson renewed his efforts early in 1846, when, in a report on missionary activity in Guilford County, he sketched the history of the Sandy Creek Association. Why, he asked, given a tradition of church building that stretched back nearly a century, did a situation exist where little was being done just a few miles to the north? Dodson blamed the inattention on the political decision made during the Revolution to create Randolph County out of the southern part of Guilford, with most of the Association's churches and, consequently, its missionary work, located in the new county. But Dodson was not without hope; there was activity at Bruce's Crossroads (now Summerfield), where he reported that a fellow missionary soon expected to baptize a female convert.

Such was the situation when J. J. James began to preach to his "little flock" of fifteen members meeting in the frowsy old brick courthouse that stood in the intersection of Greensboro's Market and Elm streets. The congregation was meeting as an "arm," a mission station, of Rockingham County's Madison Baptist Church (part of the Beulah association); and James told the convention in his July 1847 report that the members expected "to procure a more comfortable house of worship soon."

Progress, however, was painfully slow. An anonymous writer to the *Recorder* complained in 1849 that, while the Methodists could claim the addition of thirty



Elias Dodson is pictured in undated tintype, ca. 1860s. (*First Baptist Church Greensboro*)

souls in their recent revival, the town was “as destitute of Baptist preaching as the great Desert of Sahara” and had been for three months. Nevertheless, Dodson reported to the Beulah Association in 1850 that of the twenty-eight individuals he had baptized in the twelve months since the association’s last session, nine were baptized in Greensboro where white believers also contributed \$5.75 and “coloured,” whether slaves or free people is unnoted, gave \$2.50. A new church was in the making, and that year’s meeting of the Beulah Association officially recognized the Greensboro congregation as a branch of the Madison Baptist Church, with James and Dodson listed as pastors and E. W. Wood as clerk. Finally, on August 15, 1851, the newly constituted Greensboro church, with a membership of about twenty, was unanimously accepted into the association. Greensboro Baptists finally had come into their own, or so it first appeared.

Almost immediately the new congregation was beset with a variety of ills, as apparently it would be for most of the decade, with only scanty evidence describing what they were. At the next session of the Beulah Association, in August 1852, with Elias Dodson entered as pastor, Orin Churchill listed as clerk, and thirty members reported, the Greensboro church requested that, “a committee be sent to that place to assist them in settling a difficulty in said church.” Whatever the issue was, it was significant enough for the association to name seven individuals



The Baptist church in Greensboro was an “arm” of Madison Baptist Church, portrayed in this modern sketch. (Courtesy Mel Steele, Vermilion Studios, Reidsville, North Carolina)

(including J. J. James) as a visiting committee. By the time of the August 1853 session, two interesting and possibly connected events had transpired. First, the committee reported that two of its members had visited the church “and found that its members were willing to endeavor to live in harmony, and to forget all former difficulties.” Following immediately upon this hopeful report was the adoption of two curious and cojoined resolutions, both offered by Elder James: the first to appoint a committee to review procedures for licensing ministers and constituting churches and the second to affirm that the association “heartily approves the course pursued by Rev. E. Dodson, while acting as Missionary in the town of Greensborough.”

Had there been some disagreement between Dodson and the congregation? The evidence only allows for speculation, but Dodson offers an example of the kind of dispute in which on at least one occasion he had found himself a party. Sometime in 1846, Dodson jotted down in his notebook the main points of another preacher’s sermon. He probably used the word “rhapsody” as a sarcasm to describe what he heard, in the sermon given by someone named Robert Hill in Germantown, North Carolina. In it Hill denounced missionary Baptists on several scores: the gospel needed no support from church associations; the Holy Spirit was sufficient for ministerial education; God did not require colleges; missions were a waste of money; and Baptists appealed to assistance from the state legislature so often that they appeared to be working toward an established religion. Dodson’s fellow missionary John Robertson, who was also working in Guilford County, apparently responded to Hill by describing the true nature of missions and their support in the gospel and explaining why Baptist associations required a license before admitting a young man to preach. The debate between Hill and Robertson was typical among different stripes of Baptists. In light of the resolution adopted by the Beulah Association supporting Dodson’s activities in Greensboro, such a dispute may have divided the new church here. Membership according to the 1853 church report had dropped to twenty-five with five members having been excluded from the fellowship and Robert Gourley now listed as the pastor.

Shortly before the associational meeting, Dodson concluded a letter for the *Biblical Recorder* written from Greensboro with the unexpected message that a building for the church had been secured and entirely paid for with the “hope that Baptist ministers as they pass through the upper country will call and preach” (a reminder that men like Dodson usually preached in one locale no more than one Sunday a month).

The new Baptist church building was actually the old meetinghouse of the Methodist Episcopal Church, completed in 1831 under the pastoral leadership of

Peter Doub. This small brick, two-story building, only thirty by fifty feet in size, was situated in what is now the 300 block of the west side of South Elm Street. Dodson paid \$416 for the building after the Methodists moved to a new place on Market Street. Whether the building was in good repair is questionable but its purchase failed to settle the little congregation.

The next few years are murky. At the end of 1853, J. J. James left the area for Raleigh to assume editorship of the *Biblical Recorder*. Although the Beulah Association's 1854 session was to be held in Greensboro, the minutes of that meeting are not known to have survived. At its session the next year, Elias Dodson announced that he was retiring as the association's missionary, observing that since the beginning of 1844 he had traveled forty-eight thousand miles, preached 2,492 sermons, baptized twenty-seven believers, sold \$2,216 worth of books, and recorded 192 subscribers for the *Biblical Recorder* and over a dozen other religious papers emanating from Virginia to Tennessee to Alabama and Mississippi



The first church used by Greensboro Baptists was a small, two-story brick building sold to Elias Dodson in 1853 after Methodists moved to a new location on West Market Street. The building stood in the 300 block of the west side of South Elm Street. According to W. H. Eller, writing in 1917, the church stood where the Grissom Building is now (right of photograph). Walter W. Rowe, however, who had been a member of the church before it was destroyed by fire in 1885, says that it was located on the site of A. V. Sapp's store—far left of photograph, partially obscured by trees. (Photograph by author)

(the selling of religious books, tracts, and periodicals, or “colportage,” constituted an important part of a Baptist missionary’s work). Dodson continued to plead for the convention to send an able minister to Greensboro, writing in the *Recorder* at the beginning of 1855 that the town was “flourishing like a green bay tree.” Unfortunately, he lamented, Baptists were slower than other denominations. “The Saviour and his apostles paid great attention to towns, but the Baptists have in many places disregarded them.”

The Baptist State Convention did not ignore Dodson. Indeed, the need for preaching in Piedmont towns was recognized, but the convention was constrained by the cost. As early as 1852, the board of managers, at a meeting in Dodson’s Caswell County, reported to the convention that Greensboro, along with Charlotte, Wadesboro, and Henderson, “ought to have missionaries or located ministers to preach for them at least twice a month, and if our brethren throughout the State will find the means, which they can easily do, this desirable object will soon be affected.” At the 1854 session of the convention, the board noted that because of the railroad Piedmont towns “will soon be in a very few hours travel of each other” and that the Beulah Association had agreed to work with the board in sustaining mission work at the important Greensboro station. Convention president James McDaniel underscored the latter point when he wrote the board of managers late in 1857:

The towns of Greensboro and Salisbury have for years been known to you as important places, yet without any regular Baptist ministry. In each of these towns there are precious members who most anxiously desire to have a regular ministry among them. In each there is a considerable amount of Baptist sentiment among men of the world, although they are attendants upon another ministry. In each place it is believed by those best acquainted with the state of things, that a suitable Baptist ministry would receive pleasing encouragement and be successful.

That McDaniel was writing in 1857 about the absence in Greensboro of any regular ministry a year after the board of managers had appointed Elder Amos Weaver to preach there twice a month suggests that things were still not going well. By the end of 1858, the convention’s report on state missions stated that there was still no self-sustaining church in Greensboro and little Baptist preaching either here or in most of the other towns of the Piedmont, a region that state missions committee chairman Richard H. Griffith concluded would be “the most important part of the State in denominational influence, as it is now the agricultural garden of the Commonwealth.” Griffith also observed that to supply the towns, not to mention the surrounding rural districts, would cost \$5,000.



Indeed, things were not going well in Greensboro. For some unstated reason—perhaps for geographical convenience that the railroad approaching from High Point would bring—the Greensboro church requested from the Beulah Association in August 1856 “a letter of dismission” in order to join the Liberty Association, which had churches located to the south, particularly in Davidson County and along the railroad’s route. Soon thereafter the church’s thirty-two members (represented by delegates Jonas Lineberry, John Ingold, and Benjamin Churchill) and supply pastor Orin Churchill were welcomed by Amos Weaver, moderator of the Liberty Association, who was to play an important part in establishing the congregation.

Elder Amos Weaver, “rather aged but homely genius and philanthropic,” can lay claim to being the first permanent pastor appointed to the church by the Baptist State Convention, which in 1856 directed him “to preach in the town of Greensborough two sabbaths in the month, the Board [of Managers] becoming responsible to Bro. Weaver for \$300, he raising all he can in his field of labor, and giving the Board credit for the amount thus raised.” Weaver’s pastorate was short, as the congregation quickly began to come apart, but he left an important legacy for Baptist life in Guilford County. Not only did he lead the congregation at a critical time; but his son, Preston D. Weaver, would be an influential deacon in the church during the years after the Civil War; and his grandson, Rufus W. Weaver, served as president of Mercer University, pastor of First Baptist Church of Washington, DC, and executive secretary of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention. Many years after he had left his boyhood home in Greensboro, Rufus Weaver wrote of his grandfather, “My blood tingles with pardonable pride at the thought of my ancestor’s audacity.”

Regardless of his audaciousness, the elder Weaver seemed unable to prevent the church’s demise. Perhaps because of the disrepair or the distance of the South Elm Street building, the congregation had taken to meeting at the Cumberland Presbyterian Church located southwest of town. It was nearer to where many members of the congregation lived, and according to one old account, was a modest frame structure that sat on a stone foundation of approximately twenty-eight by forty feet. Cumberland Presbyterians were more commonly encountered in the mountain settlements further west where, like frontier Baptists and Methodists, they did not insist on a formally educated clergy. Although the denomination did not survive long in Guilford County, its followers had been given a plot of land by Jonathan Short in 1839 for a church with his stipulation that the building be open to all denominations.

Whatever the Greensboro Baptists did at that locale did not meet with the association’s approval; once again the reasons are unclear although one churchman

early in the twentieth century asserted that the congregation was rent by anti-slavery controversy. Such division was possible. An elderly Wesleyan Methodist preacher named Daniel Worth returned to his home place in Guilford County where he had grown up as a Quaker from Indiana in 1857. He brought with him both a commission from his church to preach against slavery and copies of one of the most controversial antislavery books of the day, Hinton Rowan Helper's *The Impending Crisis of the South*, written by another North Carolinian but outlawed in the state. Worth quickly fanned antislavery sentiment and consequently found himself in jail, charged with circulating "incendiary documents" intended to foment slave insurrection. Even though he was threatened with lynching, he drew sympathetic listeners from many churches in Guilford and Randolph counties. The situation could not have been helped by the fact that Elder Orin Churchill, described as "a rather large man nearing middle age" and pastor of the Greensboro Baptist church, also worked as a printer and edited a short-lived political newspaper called *The True American*, which backed the nativist and anti-Catholic



Cumberland Presbyterian Church stood at this site (2207 Rheims Drive) until the building was destroyed by a storm in 1875. W. H. Eller says that many of the early Baptists in the Greensboro congregation lived in the neighborhood and, for a brief time in the 1850s, used the building for their services. Little is left to indicate the cemetery that was here except the modern marker to Jonathan Short, who deeded the land in 1839, seen in the far left background. (Photograph by author)

principles of the American (“Know-Nothing”) Party. Supporters of this secretive party in the South tended to challenge what they perceived as unresponsive and entrenched politicians.

Small wonder that trouble ensued if the nascent congregation was drawn into the antislavery controversy. In August 1857, the Liberty Association recommended that the members of the Greensboro church who were worshipping at Cumberland “purify themselves,” and the delegates agreed to send Elder Amos Weaver to help if so desired. Membership had dwindled to nineteen, down from thirty-two congregants the previous year. Despite Weaver’s appointment the previous year to preach at the church, no supply pastor was named in the session minutes.

Regardless of the reason for trouble, the situation appeared hopeless. Other pastors briefly appeared (their appointments are uncertain) but the August 1858 session of the Liberty Association appointed a committee “to go on the ground, examine into the condition of the Greensborough church, and report to the next Association.” A year later, on August 26, 1859, the committee declared the church “extinct.” Its name was discontinued; never again would it appear as one of the association’s members.

Something was afoot, however. Elias Dodson had not retired from the field after all. As a missionary at large, he now reported to the Baptist State Convention: “My salary for 1856 is \$300 nominally. After deducting \$50 for the deep snow last winter, railroad and plank road expenses, ferriages, tavern bills, and other time lost, my real salary will not be much more than \$200.” Just as the Greensboro church was disintegrating, he lamented again in a bulletin printed in the *Recorder* that the convention’s board of managers had still not supplied regular preaching in either Greensboro or Salisbury. “If the Board wait for money to flow into the Treasury before the men are sought they will wait a long time. . . . The few Baptists in the above places desire preaching very much.”

The last decade before the cataclysm of the Civil War was drawing to a close. For many years missionary efforts like those of J. J. James and Elias Dodson had been spent seemingly in vain. A Baptist church in Greensboro had been organized, had even been given a building in town, and nonetheless stumbled. By 1859, the Liberty Association declared it extinct. That year, however, is remembered less for this ending than for marking the beginning of a renewed effort. At its meeting in December 1858, the convention’s board of managers at last appointed an elder to preach two Sundays a month in Greensboro. A new church was about to be constituted, and, although the church’s longevity was far from assured, its renewal put it on a more secure basis than any the Baptists in Greensboro had known before.

## 2

# A Mutual Care

*That we will exercise a mutual care.*

—Church Covenant, 1859

On Sunday, March 13, 1859, a presbytery of three ministers convened in Greensboro in order to consecrate a new Baptist church. Perhaps in gathering, Elder Levi Thorne, one of the three, traveled by coach down the nine-mile road that ran from Chapel Hill to University Station, the closest point on the railroad. There he could have joined Elder Thomas E. Skinner, coming from Raleigh. Son of Charles W. Skinner, one of the organizers of the Baptist State Convention and a major underwriter of Wake Forest College, the younger Skinner pastored First Baptist Church of Raleigh, where a bold new sanctuary in the Gothic Revival style was under construction.

Traveling only a short distance, the two men could have met Elder John Mitchell at Hillsborough, where Mitchell was residing. Mitchell had worked with Elias Dodson a few years earlier as an agent of the Baptist State Convention in raising a permanent endowment of fifty thousand dollars for Wake Forest College. He was assuming the pastorate of the newly constituted church in Greensboro (in addition to one in Hillsborough) and would be preaching there twice a month.

In the beginning, the new church would consist of only fourteen members, listed in this way in the clerk's minute book: Peyton H. Bilbro, David W. Motley, Catharine Jolly, Elizabeth Harwood, Mary D. Gregg, Mary Hyatt, Mary E. Bilbro, Louisa N. Bilbro, Mary A. Shackelford, Mary Burns, James Gretter, Moses Patrick, Aggy Morehead, and Susan Gretter.

Elder Mitchell read aloud the church covenant. The covenant he used was the one adopted in 1833 by the New Hampshire Baptist Convention. It was a staple for Baptists and available in J. Newton Brown's influential *Encyclopedia*

of *Religious Knowledge* (1835) and the popular guide by William Crowell, *The Church Member's Manual* (1847):

### Church Covenant

Having been, as we trust, brought by Divine grace to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves wholly to Him; we do now solemnly and joyfully Covenant, with each other, to walk together in Him with brotherly love, to His glory as our common Lord. We do therefore, in His strength engage:

That we will exercise a mutual care, as Members one of another, to promote the growth of the whole body in Christian Knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to the end that we may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

That to promote and secure this object, we will uphold the public worship of God and the ordinances of His house and hold constant communion with each other therein;

That we will cheerfully contribute of our property for the support of the poor and for the maintenance of the faithful Ministry of the Gospel among us.

That we will not omit closet and family religion at home, nor allow ourselves in the too common neglect of the great duty of religiously training up our children and those under our care, with a view to the service of Christ and the enjoyment of Heaven.

That we will walk circumspectly in the world that we may win their souls; remembering that God has not given us the spirit of fear but of power, and love, and of a sound mind; that we are the light of the world, and the salt of the earth; and that a city set on a hill cannot be hid.

That we will frequently exhort and if occasion shall require admonish one another, according to Matthew 18 in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves lest we also be tempted; and that as in Baptism we have been buried with Christ and raised again so there is in us a special obligation thenceforth to walk in newness of life.

And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make us perfect in every good work, to do His will; working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight; through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, forever and ever. Amen.

## "Church Covenant"

Hearing been, as we trust, brought by Divine grace to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ; and to give up ourselves wholly to Him; We do now solemnly, and joyfully Covenant, with each other, to walk together in Him with brotherly love, to His glory as our Common Lord. We do therefore, in His strength engage, That we will exercise, a mutual care, as members one of another, to promote the growth of the whole body in Christian Knowledge, holiness and Comfort; to the end that we may stand, perfect, and complete in all the will of God.

That to promote, and secure this object, we will uphold the public worship of God, and the ordinances of His house and hold constant Communion with each other therein; that we will cheerfully contribute of our property, for the support of the poor, and for the maintenance of the faithful Ministry of the Gospel, among us. That, we will not omit Close, and family religion at home, nor allow ourselves in the too common neglect of the great duty of religiously training up our children, and those under our care, with a view to the service of Christ, and the enjoyment of Heaven.

That we will walk Circumspectly in the world, that we may win their souls; remembering that God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of

The original covenant, first read when the church was constituted, March 13, 1859. Like many congregations of that era, Baptists in Greensboro used the 1833 Covenant of the New Hampshire Baptist Convention. The covenant was inscribed at the beginning of the earliest surviving minute book containing church records from 1873-85.

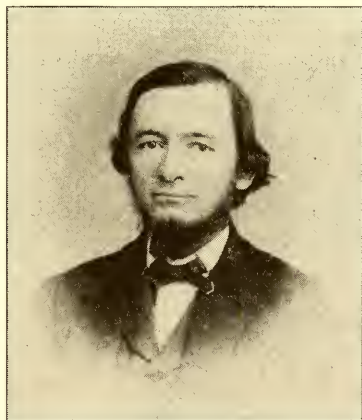
The charge to the church was delivered by Elder Thorne, after which Elder Skinner offered a prayer. Thorne's benediction closed the service and marked the high point of a weekend of activity; according to the *Biblical Recorder*, there had been preaching in town on Saturday night and again three times on Sunday. The Missionary Baptist Church of Greensboro was duly constituted.

This scanty account is preserved in the earliest church record still extant: a clerk's minute book that preserves the official transactions of the church's congregational meetings. The book is small—eight by eleven inches and a half-inch thick—with brownish, marble-papered boards and quarter binding and corners done in calf leather, all of which are now much worn. The earliest minutes in the book are dated 1873, which means that, if written accounts were kept at an earlier time, they have not been preserved, the only exceptions being the constituting of the church and its covenant.

As the early years were particularly trying, it is unsurprising that so little documentation has survived, although one is left curious to know if those first members sensed something different about how the church was organized this time around. The new church brought together three favorable circumstances: the fruit of years of missionary zeal by men like Dodson and James, the unflinching efforts of a handful of committed Baptists in Greensboro who were, more often than not, women, and the employment of a pastor by the Baptist State Convention.

In fact, the convention's board of managers reported that Mitchell had been appointed by the board on December 1, 1858, to preach two Sundays a month in Greensboro, with the board agreeing to pay him a yearly salary of \$200. By the time the convention met in November 1859, the board opined that "the prospects of our cause in that place are considered encouraging. Since the constitution of the church, 22 have been received by letter and baptism, and the church has paid \$53 for his services." Meanwhile, Mitchell also supplied "High Point and Thomasville with preaching in the week, and a church consisting of 9 members has been constituted at the latter place," while continuing his pastorate in Hillsborough.

At this distance the early members of Mitchell's congregation are difficult but not completely impossible to discern. Sometimes



John Mitchell is pictured in undated carte-de-visite, ca. 1860s. (North Carolina Baptist Historical Collection, Wake Forest University)

they can be glimpsed through federal census records. Church clerk Peyton H. Bilbro, for example, a Virginian by birth, was a section master for the North Carolina Railroad. He and his wife, Mary E. (Clary) Bilbro, also of Virginia, were married in 1845 and by 1860 were the parents of three children. Louisa N. Bilbro, age forty-five, was Peyton's mother. Although Peyton left the church fairly early, generations of the family would continue to be associated with it. Mary remained a member into her widowhood in the 1890s before she was removed from the roll for attending a Methodist church.

Catharine Jollie (both of her names are variously spelled) was a mainstay and passed her legacy of service through her daughter to her granddaughter. Born in North Carolina around 1820, she was married to James Jollie, another Virginian and a merchant in town.

Of Miss Mary Hyatt (or Hiatt, as her name was most often spelled), latter-day church builder Judge William H. Eller would note after her death in 1904, "She was a woman of strong gifts and fearlessly lived a Christian worker in the earliest organization of the church. She could open a Sunday School and keep it going year in and year out unaided by the men folks, and she could read and sing and pray and she could teach. During this early period she did all these things in the same hour." If anyone could claim to be the "mother of the church," he concluded, it was she. Together with Jollie, Hyatt was also part of the tiny congregation that earlier in the decade had met in town as an arm of the Madison church.

Less certain are the identities of the others in the new congregation. The one Mary D. Gregg who appears in the 1860 federal census for Guilford County was forty-four years old, married to a dentist of fair economic standing, and lived in a neighborhood that included a lawyer, shoe and bed maker, teacher, carpenter, and wagon maker. By contrast, a thirty-two-year-old Mary Shackelford lived with only her two young children and was described in the census as a laborer. As her near neighbor was former Governor John Motley Morehead, perhaps she worked at Blandwood, his Italianate mansion at the south edge of town. The other white congregants in the list are indiscernible in the historical record.

James Gretter, Moses Patrick, Aggy Morehead, and Susan Gretter were listed separately; and the story has always been that they were slaves. In the antebellum South both slaves and free people of color were allowed, even encouraged, to join white churches (where masters did not need to worry over how the gospel was proclaimed) and usually were seated separately in an upstairs gallery, which the South Elm Street church was described as having. James and Susan Gretter, therefore, may have been the chattel of Mary A. Gretter, widow of the Presbyterian church's minister John A. Gretter. The slave schedule for the 1860



federal census shows her owning five slaves, including a male and female, both seventy years of age. Aggy Morehead may have been associated with either John Motley Morehead or his brother, James T. Morehead, whose holdings were particularly extensive. Perhaps Moses Patrick was the slave of druggist Thomas J. Patrick, a member of the only family with this surname in the 1850 federal census of the county, who at the time was advertising in the *Greensborough Patriot* the availability of Sanford's Liver Invigorator.

How did the revived church fare? Typical of its day, a newspaper announcement of its organization provided only sparse details:

The Baptists of this place have very recently organized themselves, repaired their church and selected Rev. Mr. Mitchell as their minister. Also, they have established a Sunday School, which under the management of our worthy townsman, C. E. W. Dobbs, Superintendent, will doubtless accomplish much good.

For a time, however, it seemed that only Baptists took notice. Five months to the day after its constitution, on August 13, 1859, the Greensboro church asked for admission to the Beulah Baptist Association and was unanimously admitted by the session. Elder Mitchell and church clerk Peyton Bilbro reported that seven new members had been baptized and two more accepted by letter, with one dismissed by letter, for a total membership of twenty-three. One dollar was contributed for association dues.

One of the most striking influences in this new beginning was the involvement of women. Even before the 1859 constitution of the church, five sisters in the faith including Miss Mary Hiatt, Mrs. Catharine Jollie, Mrs. Pattie Cole, Mrs. Mary Thomas, and Mrs. Martha Newton banded together for home worship. Hiatt's unflagging efforts to establish a Sunday School for as many children as she could gather, followed by years of devoted service, helped secure the church's foundation through difficult times. One early account observes how Hiatt performed her duties:

She went out into the byways and lanes of the village (then) and into the country as well and invited children and parents to come to school and by kindness compelled them. She tells the writer that out of her class, and a goodly sized one, she had the pleasure of seeing them all accept Jesus and join the church and all save one connected themselves with the Baptist church. . . . She notes that boys living in the country five or six miles attended this school and were most

faithful attendants and church workers. Spelling, reading, writing, catechism, Bible Dictionary, and the Bible were the branches taught as secular education was not as far advanced as now, and most of our Sunday Schools pursued this or similar methods.

Shortly after her death in 1904, Mary A. Payne, the married name by which Hiatt was known to later generations of members, was memorialized by deacons Walter W. Rowe and A. Wayland Cooke. They quoted a letter from Dr. John Mitchell in which the elderly former pastor remembered, “She was a great help to us from the beginning. Of a Methodist family, she remained true to her convictions, a very decided Baptist and true to the Master. She was patient and quiet, faithful at the post of duty, and ready for work. I could always rely upon Sister Payne.”

One of Elder Mitchell’s first baptisms was of Charles Edwin Willoughby Dobbs, a resident of Greensboro. Although he remained only briefly in town, leaving in 1860 to pursue his education, C. E. W. Dobbs was the first of many who would embark from the Greensboro church for wider fields of service. In Dobb’s case that meant studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary soon after it opened in Greenville, South Carolina, and later Baylor University and, among a host of pastorates, serving as recording secretary of the Kentucky Baptist Convention (1871–81) and secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention (1878–81).

In the summer of 1860, Elder Mitchell asked that J. S. Walthall and J. J. James visit Greensboro to preach during Mitchell’s absence. Both in coming and going during the second weekend in August, the three men exchanged greetings at the railroad depot with Mitchell in transit to and from Hillsborough. Arriving on Saturday evening, Walthall and James could only visit a few places as they strolled around town. Near the depot, they passed the offices of the *Greensborough Patriot*, the town’s primary newspaper. A new courthouse, built of stuccoed brick with classical details and Corinthian columns and a graceful wooden tower, stood gleaming on the northwest corner of Elm and Market streets. Like Baptists before them, they both admired and envied what the Presbyterians were doing with the education of young women at Edgeworth Female Seminary and the Methodists at Greensboro Female College, leading their readers to conjecture how many young Baptist women who attended these schools “are thereby lost to the cause of truth as held by ourselves.”

Surely the two elders did not mean to overlook one young woman who was not lost to the Baptist cause despite her education: Miss Eliza Moring of Chatham County, North Carolina. Moring had been an Edgeworth student not long after the school’s opening in 1840. She had later married Matthew T. Yates

of Wake Forest and was baptized into the church by college president Samuel Wait. In 1847, the Yateses would be the first North Carolinian couple to serve as foreign missionaries in China, where they worked for the remainder of their lives. The young Eliza Moring lived with an uncle while she attended school in Greensboro; perhaps Catharine Jollie, a later neighbor and also from Chatham County, followed her exploits with extra interest.

Regarding the Baptist church in Greensboro, the visiting elders observed that it was “yet feeble, but the labors of their amiable and earnest pastor, are meeting with encouraging success. They love him much, and as far as we could judge they also ‘love one another with pure hearts fervently.’” By all accounts, Mitchell was an effective pastor; one later writer declared that the “useful and youthful beloved disciple was much loved.” Physically he was a short man; one of the few surviving observations about the appearance of the interior of the South Elm Street church relates that when Mitchell rose to preach, he was “so short that only his head and shoulder tips would peer above the little ‘pigeon boxed’ pulpit of the little brick meeting house.”

With Mitchell as pastor, the congregation began to attract new members. Another early baptized believer was Miss Margaret N. Buchanan. A longtime member, Buchanan married physician Henry B. Marley after he was received into the church in 1873. Sister Marley, a later churchman would remember, had been a pupil in Mary Hiatt’s Sunday School, and she was a leader in the church’s Woman’s Missionary Union.

As the Greensboro church began to take root, the convention took notice. The board of managers reported in 1860 that Mitchell was preaching the second and fourth Sundays of each month. During the past year the church had baptized fifteen new members and received by letter another five, for a membership of thirty-nine. Prayer meeting was being held semimonthly, as was a small but regularly attended Sunday School. The only thing that hindered Elder Mitchell’s little flock was the “need of a more comfortable house of worship than that which they now occupy.”

By November 1861, the situation in Greensboro continued to be hopeful, as Mitchell’s “labors have been greatly blessed and his heart cheered in seeing the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hands.” Prayer meeting was now a weekly occurrence, and “congregations have been generally good.” Membership had increased to fifty-eight, with fourteen baptisms and eight received by letter. In his report to the board, Mitchell described “a refreshing season”:

Last Thursday week we commenced a protracted meeting which continued for a full week. Brother Mason of Yanceyville was with

me. He labored faithfully and God blessed his labors. Six persons professed conversion and others came forward as anxious inquirers. The Lord has blessed us at Greensboro, for which we feel devoutly thankful.

Even as the pastor reported good news, affairs in the state and across the South were darkening. War had begun the previous spring at Fort Sumter, barely two years after the congregation first read its covenant. The task of beginning a Baptist church with a small, modest congregation was made immeasurably more difficult during a conflict of unimaginable suffering and hardship.

The first blow, however, came not from the battlefield but from John Mitchell's resignation in 1861, so that he could return to his home in Bertie County to care for his aged parents. Although he continued to visit and preach occasionally in Greensboro through 1863, his presence was missed, and, as late as 1874, the church tried to call him back to Greensboro. Elder Skinner preached as he was able. Elder J. B. Jackson (who by some accounts may have preached at the church a few years earlier) was pastor in 1862 and 1863.

For 1864, Theodore Whitfield served the congregation. Although born in Mississippi, Whitfield had North Carolina roots, and he returned to the state to study at the university in Chapel Hill. In 1859, he married Annie Eliza Morehead, daughter of the former congressman from Greensboro, James T. Morehead. As a pastor in Mississippi earlier in the war, Whitfield authored a tract that typified the period's religious sentiment entitled, "An Appeal to Backslidden Christians," in which he urged, "If you will return [to Christ], the arms of mercy extend as freely to you as to any sinner." In later years, during her husband's pastorate in Richmond, Virginia, Annie Whitfield presided at the 1888 organizational meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention's Woman's Missionary Union.

If, as an earlier historical sketch of the church has it, Dr. Whitfield and his wife returned to Greensboro because of the war's destruction in Mississippi, they were joined by other refugees. As Union forces threatened Fontainebleau, the family's plantation home in Prince William County, Virginia, Baptist minister and Confederate chaplain Patrick Henry Fontaine Jr., moved to Greensboro with his father, William Spotswood Fontaine. In February 1865, the younger Fontaine, named for his great-grandfather of Revolutionary fame, married a cousin and preached at the church through 1866, reputedly without salary.

The war affected the church in more ways than simply forcing the movement of people. Although the *Biblical Recorder* continued to be published until near the end of the conflict (church members Catharine Jollie, C. C. Huffman,

Daniel H. La Pish, and Miss R. A. Lanier were on record for renewing their subscriptions in 1863), it was for a paper reduced in size owing to the escalating costs of printing. In its pages, instead of appeals for church building, they would have seen Elias Dodson's column on how to manufacture saltpeter—an ingredient of gunpowder—on the farm. As Dodson doubtlessly recognized, army colportage subsumed what had been mission work, with spiritual needs in the military often going unmet despite great effort. John Mitchell, for example, left home to work as a missionary and colporteur in the Confederate army. Even the task of obtaining Bibles for the soldiers, particularly as revivals ran through Confederate armies, grew increasingly difficult. With permission of the governor of North Carolina, Levi Thorne managed to secure the shipment of 100,000 Bibles and New Testaments from the American Bible Society of New York to be distributed mostly among state troops. In October 1864, the convention commissioned Elder Skinner of Raleigh an agent of the Board of Missions to procure Bibles and New Testaments in England with two one thousand dollar Confederate cotton bonds to purchase and run through the Union blockade stereotype plates for printing copies of the New Testament. Grimmer reports pointed to the war's toll: the state convention directed the Board of Education "to appoint an agent to canvass the state and solicit funds for the education of indigent, diseased and disabled soldiers." Church building in these circumstances, no matter how promising the start had been, came to a standstill.

Nevertheless, in some fashion at least—the record is too fragmentary to know exactly how—the Greensboro church continued to meet. Church clerk, Daniel H. La Pish reported to the 1864 session of the Beulah Association that of the twenty-six churches in the association sixteen had Sunday Schools, including the one organized in Greensboro in February 1859. Presently the Sunday School had thirty-one pupils taught by one male and four female teachers. A total of sixteen hundred Bible verses had been memorized in Sunday School. La Pish concluded that the church possessed an average number of books (the total number is not recorded) and a good prospect—this from a church of fifty members, who in the previous year had given \$10 to the association fund; \$32 for foreign missions; and \$110 for army colportage (with \$60 of that amount designated for home missions). Even in 1866, in the turmoil that followed the end of the war, pastor William S. Fontaine, his son, church delegate Elder Patrick Henry Fontaine, and church clerk La Pish could report the addition of a mission Sunday School begun in May, with total enrollment in both Sunday Schools being 212 pupils taught by nine male and fourteen female teachers. By war's end the church also reached out to its Christian neighbors, as the secretary for the Presbyterian church noted in 1865 when the Rev. Jacob Henry Smith preached to his congregation in the South

Elm Street church because his own had been converted into a hospital for Confederate wounded.

Around this time Mary A. Dixon moved to Greensboro from war-battered Richmond, Virginia. Dixon, with her sister Eliza Hilliard and Mary Hiatt Payne, would become stewards of Christian education and mission work and leaders who would preserve and revive the struggling church in the postwar years.

Whatever the promise of the future, however, difficulties abounded in the present. Pastors came and went and members began to drift away. Once again, in 1867, the Beulah Association was called upon to sort out some kind of difficulty that had divided the congregation. The old building on South Elm Street must have been nearly unusable because a prospective pastor who came to town in 1871 resorted to preaching in a rented hall. That pastor, however, returned to spend several critical years with the flagging congregation. His ministry, to judge simply from the orderly minutes of congregational meetings—no matter how riotous their content—marks the renewal of a recognizable and sustained Baptist presence in Greensboro.

# 3

## Many and Sore Trials

*It has been called to pass through many and sore trials.*

—Rev. Henry Petty

Pasted inside the front cover of the Greensboro Baptist Church's earliest surviving church minute book is a clipping of a letter written to the editor of the *Biblical Recorder* and printed in its pages. The letter was by Rev. Henry Petty of Chatham, Virginia, who was called to preach in Greensboro once a month from May to December 1878. Although he had resigned his charge by the time he wrote the letter, Petty professed a continued deep interest in the church's welfare:

It has been called to pass through many and sore trials, and the wonder is that it exists at all. Some of the best men and women I know are members of that church. They have struggled for years with difficulties that seemed sometimes ready to crush them, but still the church lives and will live. There is a bright future yet I believe for the Greensboro Baptist church.

Petty was not exaggerating, either in his description of the past or his prediction for the future. However, from his vantage point of sometime around 1880, when Petty penned his letter, it was anything but obvious that the church would ever prosper.

The years that followed the Civil War were difficult, even for a place that had escaped the war's worst ravages. Whatever happened to the enslaved people listed in the church's first membership roll is lost to time, but one story survives that testifies to how the collapse of slavery affected even those of modest means, like nearly all of the white membership at the time. For several years after the war, Greensboro was home to an Ohioan and former Union army of-

ficer, Albion W. Tourgée, who emerged as the most noted and for many the most notorious of the carpetbaggers. He moved to town in 1865 with his wife Emma to begin business as a nurseryman. Soon, entering Reconstruction politics and eventually elected a superior court judge, Tourgée excited attention in town when he and his wife brought into their home two young mulatto girls who had been born as slaves. Many years later, when bitter memories of Tourgée had faded, residents in town still recalled an occasion when Albion and Emma Tourgée attended “the Baptist church” with the two girls in tow, only to find that after the service “a committee ‘waited upon’ him telling him that hereafter if he attended the church he must not sit the girls with the white people.” If this memory is of Greensboro Baptist Church, it offers a glimpse of a congregation forced to grapple, and not for the last time, with the issue of race. Just as the mores of an old culture had been overturned, so, too, would the church find itself stressed by the challenges of a new, faster-paced era.

Not surprisingly, the memories of a child, also recalled many years later, offer a brighter view of the era. Jessie Yarborough Garland wrote to J. Clyde Turner in 1930 about her childhood in the church. Born in 1860, only a few weeks after her father’s death from tuberculosis, Jessie and her three siblings lived at the Oxford Female College in Oxford, North Carolina, where her mother Elizabeth worked during the administration of John H. Mills (who after the Civil War helped organize in Oxford the state’s first permanent orphanage). Elizabeth then moved to Greensboro, managing a boardinghouse on South Elm Street across from the church. Elizabeth gave what help she could spare from her household duties to the efforts of Sunday School superintendent Mary Dixon and “her godly sister” Miss Eliza Hilliard. Mrs. Garland remembered how when she was a child their families rented and gathered for worship in the Odd Fellows Hall—an indication of the old church building’s dereliction—and were visited for preaching by Patrick Henry Fontaine. Although Jessie could not recall the details of the old church (it was rebuilt during her childhood), she did remember playing the little organ, which she said was on the floor opposite the pulpit: “My feet could not reach the pedals, so some gentleman sat by me and pumped the organ. Mrs. Dixon sat on the other side selecting the hymns & meters and leading the singing.” In those days Jessie said that her “mother’s share of the work was her generous contributions, wise counsel and entertainment of visiting ministers.”

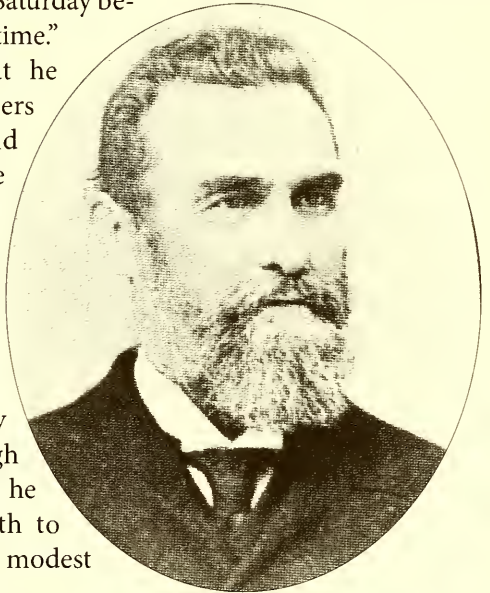
Of those who visited her home, Jessie Yarborough’s recollection of the elderly Elias Dodson was most vivid. Dodson would walk into her house “with an old cape over his shoulders, looking like the prophet Elisha. No matter what day of the week, he would always say[,] ‘Sister[,] will you please have the church



bell rung.” But a pastor named James Brantley Richardson baptized her, and his arrival in town marked a new beginning for the church that Dodson must have rejoiced to witness.

Just as the Civil War was beginning in 1861, Richardson completed his studies at Wake Forest College. Serving first as an army missionary and then a state missionary, he visited Greensboro in the winter of 1870–71 with a view toward accepting a call from the town’s Baptist congregation. Many years later Richardson recalled in a letter to W. W. Rowe that he first visited Greensboro at the request of Watson B. Crump, someone whom Richardson described as “a cobbler and wage earner as watchman at [the] Rail Road Depot.” Crump was also a leader in the small congregation. He held a variety of church offices at one time or another including usher, sexton, deacon, trustee, member of the finance and spiritual committees, and, now, pulpit supply committee. Richardson had every reason not to be impressed with Crump’s blandishments. He arrived in town knowing no one and preaching his first sermon in Garrett Hall to a congregation of three people: Crump, Mary A. Dixon, and Sarah A. Potts, who, if he did not realize it at the time, would be a source of exasperation in the coming months. “They had on Saturday evening paid three dollars for use of said Hall to hold our Sabbath services. This sum we had to pay for every Sabbath we used the Hall, and as we had no credit the same had to be paid every Saturday before we used it. This we did for sometime.”

Elder Richardson claimed that he could find only about a dozen members of the church living in or around Greensboro, all of whom he said were poor. (The only exception to this humble economic standing, Richardson noted, was Mary Payne, who had left and now returned to Greensboro and joined the church six months after his arrival.) Crump, Dixon and Potts agreed in 1871 to pay Richardson’s railroad fare from High Point and boarding expense so that he could come to town once a month to preach; with this agreement and the modest salary provided by the convention, the church secured a new pastor. For the first six months he traveled



Dr. J. B. Richardson pictured in engraved photograph, ca. 1890s. (*North Carolina Baptist Historical Collection, Wake Forest University*)

to Greensboro, Richardson reported visiting no one except the few church members he found. Catharine Jollie was still alive but was an invalid and unable to be present often. Peyton and Mary Bilbro lived at the edge of town. Several Baptists, including William and Thomas Buchanan, who would be instrumental in establishing an early church mission, lived in the country.

"I was often hissed when I walked the streets," Richardson noted, "and on more than once while I was preaching. Such was the contempt in which the Baptists were then held by many!" Nevertheless, the Sunday School was reorganized; with Mary Dixon as superintendent (as Jessie Yarbrough Garland remembered) and weekly prayer meeting instituted as well, the revived congregation began "unfurling our Banner to the breezes of Greensboro." It was not an easy task for any of them. Dixon, for example, had grown up "a lady of high culture and superb refinement" in Richmond, where Baptists enjoyed a stronger presence, and Crump, at first her only assistant, was a wage earner working for the railroad. Richardson recalled Dixon's efforts: "With mine own eyes I have seen Sister Dixon on her way to her Sabbath School wading through snow 6 to 8 inches deep with a babe in her arms and leading another little child by the hand, going thus for one quarter of a mile. The sidewalks had not been cleared of the snow. Such faithfulness justly inspired her pastor! Often I would say, 'Sister, how can you face such opposition and struggle on so faithfully?' Her reply invariably was, 'Thus my Savior led, and I am only trying to follow Him, and I am happy in the work!'"

Meanwhile, Elder Richardson had begun his work, preaching in town three Sabbaths each month, according to the Mission Board report for 1871. His approach was like the one outlined in a resolution introduced that same year by J. H. Mills and adopted by the state convention meeting in Charlotte:

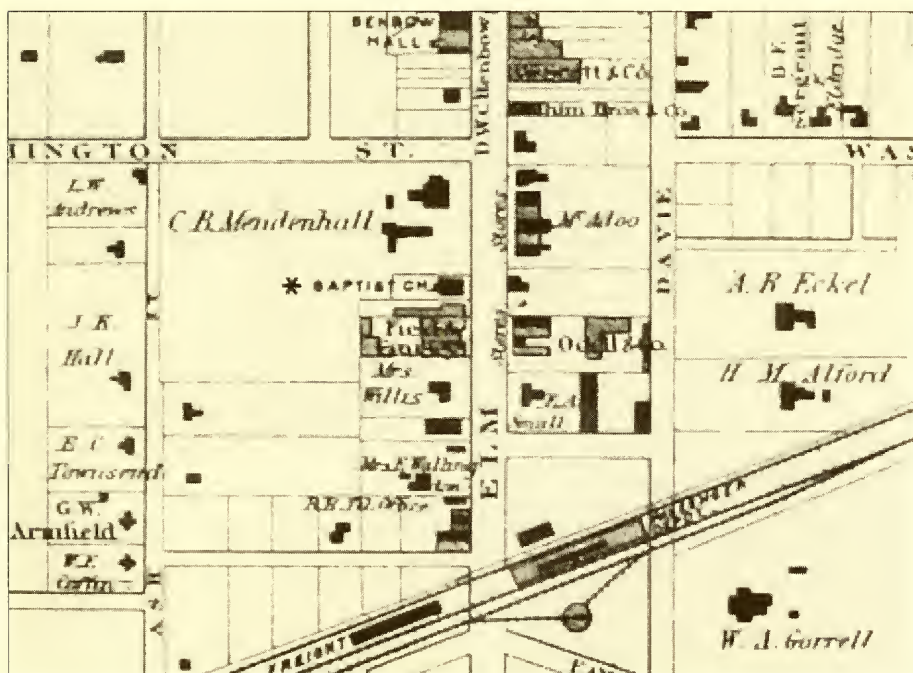
Resolved, That we respectfully and affectionately commend to the consideration of the churches:

1. The propriety of making their houses of worship comfortable and attractive.
2. The importance of assembling the men and the women, as well as the children, every Sunday, for the study of the Bible.
3. The advantages of permanent pastorates, and the disadvantages of annual elections.
4. The duty of paying pastors such salaries as will enable them to purchase the books they need, and to study the subjects on which they impart instruction.

Richardson wasted no time in rectifying the dilapidated condition of the old

brick church building on South Elm Street. At the Beulah Association meeting in August 1871, he discussed the condition of the building and talked privately with delegates about the claims of the church, which led the association to adopt two motions. The first called for the association's trustees to dispose of the building and to use the resulting proceeds to erect a new building. The second allowed for the suspension of regular business so that Richardson could appeal for money, which resulted in a collection of forty dollars.

A new church building was to be erected at the same location of the old Methodist meeting house, purchased years earlier by Elias Dodson. The Beulah Association prepared a deed dated August 11, 1871, that transferred the property to Peyton H. Bilbro, Preston D. Weaver, and Thomas Buchanan, trustees of the Missionary Baptist Church of Greensboro. For the sum of two hundred dollars, title to the property (described as situated on the west side of South Elm Street, bounded by the adjoining commercial property of Cyrus P. Mendenhall and James Sloan, and measuring sixty feet back from and forty feet fronting the street) was conveyed to the Greensboro church that had inherited, as the deed proclaimed, "the faith once delivered unto the saints."



Shown above is detail from "Gray's New Map of Greensboro, Guilford County, North Carolina, 1882." The church stood on the west side of South Elm Street across from two Greensboro landmarks: Odell Hardware and the McAdoo Boarding House. (Photograph courtesy Charles Hartis)

Although details are lacking (such as whether the walls were razed or only the interior stripped out), construction of a new building must have proceeded apace with money borrowed from the town bank. The *Greensboro Patriot* reported on July 4, 1872, that construction would presently be resumed (with no indication of when it first began) and continued until the building was completed. On July 24, the *Patriot* said that work was progressing in earnest and would be completed in a short time. An announcement appeared in the newspaper on August 28 that the congregation would commence holding services in the new church on Sunday, September 1, even though the building was not quite finished. A few days later, word came that the Baptists had purchased a new bell with “a soft and pleasant tone,” perhaps closer to the sound of the bell Mrs. Garland remembered Elder Dodson asking her to ring when she was a child!

A correspondent for the *Greensboro Patriot* provided this picture of Greensboro Baptists in a letter dated January 22, 1873:

This town is a delightful place to spend this hallowed day. Peace and quiet reign supreme and the toll of bells rings out from all of the evangelical denominations. All have handsome churches neatly furnished—except the Baptists. Theirs is a small, but very pretty church, situated on the lower end of Main [Elm] street, and had not yet been furnished, although they hold services there. . . . At night, we worshipped at the Baptist Church, under the care of Rev. Mr. Richardson—who took for his subject, Regeneration—a most difficult subject to handle, and upon which he was preaching a series of sermons and only gave the negative view of the subject on that occasion.

The “small, but very pretty church” was dedicated on Sunday, June 4, 1876, by which time S. F. Conrad had succeeded Richardson as pastor. Elder Columbus Durham, of Durham, North Carolina, preached the sermon at the eleven a.m. service. A series of revival meetings were held in the days that followed, with the *Patriot* noting that “several professions of religion have been made.”

Not surprisingly, all this activity revived the congregation. Mary Hiatt had married attorney John W. Payne, clerk of the United States district court in Greensboro, and, after apparently living away for some time, returned and “at once came to the side of sister Dixon,” as Elder Richardson later recalled: “Different in temperament and training yet they became such co-laborers as but few pastors have ever known in pioneering work. Soon, Miss Eliza Hilliard, a sister of Mrs. Dixon, joined them and made a trio of the most consecrated servants of

Jesus. In their mission to rebuild Zion's Wall, no quarrying work was too menial for their hands." Soon joining them was one of the first men whom Richardson welcomed to the congregation: Robert L. Vernon, agent at the Richmond and Danville Railroad Depot and one of the most durable and



This key was to the South Elm Street church. (Photograph courtesy Charles Hartis)

longtime members of the church. "He at once became as the right-hand of the pastor," Richardson declared. "A more helpful brother no pastor ever had."

Building Zion's Wall, however, proved to be a daunting task. Unfortunately for the congregation, construction of the new church was ending just as an economic panic in 1873 marked the beginning of a severe depression that would make raising money to pay off the mortgage almost impossible. In a memorable recounting, Richardson told what happened when it became apparent that the congregation faced foreclosure on a house of worship so nearly completed:

We had our new house so near completed that we were holding services in it. But there was against us a note of \$700 in the Bank secured by mortgage on our house & cot. On one Saturday we were notified that our note would go to protest on following Monday. The pastor was told by our treasurer, R. L. Vernon, that only \$150 was in the treasury to meet it. On Sabbath the little band under a heavy burden met. They had as they thought done all they could to pay off a previous amount due. The Bank said if we would on Monday pay \$300 they would give us 60 days on balance & still hold the mortgage. After a sermon to not more than 20 hearers, of who 13 were members, the pastor put the situation before them. The leaders of the Band said let us try. And to the struggle they went, Sister Payne & Dixon leading. Their effort made & money counted they still lacked \$60 of having the \$300! Silence reigned for a few minutes. Silent prayers went up. Tears began to fall on every face. Sister Payne broke the heavy suspense by saying "This house shall not be sold." Sister Dixon replied,

“Never, Never,” and Bro. Vernon repeated the echo! And, to their second effort they hurried, When lo! We had five hundred dollars to meet the Bank. The next day at 9 a.m. we were at the Bank. It had been said that the \$300 required by the Bank could not be raised and the church must go under the hammer! This was what some people hoped for. The Bank counted the five hundred in great astonishment, asking, “Where did you get all this money?” The answer was readily given, that the little weak Baptist people had raised every cent of it. The result was the mortgage was handed over to us, and all the time we wished given to pay the remaining \$200 without any interest charged! In this great victory the pastor felt Sister Dixon, Payne & Vernon led us.

An entry in the church minute book from October 4, 1873, records a more prosaic account of how this indebtedness was met. After an oyster supper had realized \$180, the pastor called upon members and friends of the church to remain with him for a few minutes after Sunday morning worship, when he shared with them his hope that at least \$300 could be raised in order to pay off one of the bank loans. John W. Payne—Mary Hiatt Payne’s husband—rose and announced that instead of giving \$100 to the endowment fund of Wake Forest College as he had intended, he would instead contribute the money to the church. Richardson acknowledged Payne’s generosity, particularly as Payne was not a member of the church; and before the meeting dispersed, another \$160 was added to Payne’s donation. The minutes also record amounts contributed in 1872–73 by a score of churches, associations, the state convention, non-members who lived outside of Greensboro, and twenty donations “from little folks under 12 years of age.”

Not for the last time Greensboro Baptists built a house of worship only to find themselves in financial straits. In telling this story in his history, W. W. Rowe assured the reader that Richardson underplayed his own leadership role and financial sacrifice. Even so, it was small wonder that at times like these Richardson felt he was part of Gideon’s army marching in expectant victory against the enemies of the Lord. “Toil on, victory is ours, we see it, we feel it, we know it,” he remembered hearing his little band encourage him. “Some day the Master will give us to be a power here in His service.”

There must also have been times when such a day seemed far removed. Surely Richardson was exasperated beyond reckoning by a spectacular dissension within the church that concerned none other than one of the first people to greet him when he arrived in Greensboro: Mrs. Sarah A. Potts. To describe

Sister Potts as difficult is putting it mildly; even Mrs. Garland, then only a child, recalled years later in her letter to Dr. Turner that Potts “was always a source of contention.” How the church confronted the controversy involving Sister Potts’s handling of church money and her comments about the church reveal much about a small congregation struggling to put to use biblical injunctions for resolving disputes.

The controversy brewed for years but came to a boil in May 1874 when a committee appointed to compile an official record of the church’s dealings with Mrs. Potts made its report to the congregation. According to the report, Brother C. T. Leo had charged in July 1872, that Sister Potts lied to him about her deposit of \$25 of church money at the Greensboro Bank in June 1869 (left unexplained is why the charge was so long in coming). The evidence was heard at a September 1872 congregational meeting in the rented space of the Odd Fellows Hall. Leo accused Potts of not actually depositing the money until a year later, as evidenced by entries in the bank records, which showed Potts making deposits in June and August 1870. Further, Brother Leo testified that Potts had told him that she had deposited the money as “agent of the Baptist Church,” whereas a bank statement showed that she had deposited the money only in her own name. Brother W. B. Crump (another member of that small group who had welcomed Richardson to Greensboro) corroborated these charges when he related a discussion he had with Sister Potts concerning the date when the money was deposited. Potts defended herself by denying such a conversation with Crump ever occurred: “He was the last man with whom she would have conversed on said subject.” While she had originally deposited the money in her name, Sister Potts also produced additional bank statements showing that she had acted on the advice of friends and changed how her name appeared to show that she was acting in an official capacity for the church. Afterward Sister Potts was asked to retire so that the congregation could discuss the matter more fully. Two votes, the first with six in favor of sustaining the first charge, and eight opposing, and the second with eight in favor and eleven opposing, cleared Sarah Potts of wrongdoing.

Unfortunately, well enough was not good enough. At the same conference Brother Crump brought an additional charge—namely that Sister Potts had shown contempt for the church when she reportedly complained that “she thought it hard that she should be brought up here to be tried by a set of ignoramuses” and that she had no intention of being “mealy mouthed” about it. Once again Potts was required to explain herself to the congregation, which she did in a written confession submitted in October 1872. Elder Richardson again presided and was joined by longtime church supporter J. J. James. Brothers

Crump, Leo, Bilbro and sisters Jollie, Leo, and Potts were among those who attended. In her confession Potts said that she had been astonished by the charges of financial dishonesty in a matter so easily explained. "My Christian character was assailed and my dignity as a lady brought into contempt." She admitted that in her indignation she had made remarks that reflected poorly on the church, for which she was sorry, and she now asked for forgiveness and "the prayer of the true followers of God to assist me in this trying ordeal."

The congregation quickly voted to forgive Potts and should have immediately adjourned because she then took the opportunity to bring a complaint against Leo and Crump for having made charges "which are to all appearances of a malicious character." This time the pastor turned to Leo and Crump for an explanation. Leo declared that he knew in his own heart that the sister was mistaken because he had never entertained malicious feelings toward her but only wanted "to protect and keep pure the Church of Christ." He had bank statements to support what he believed was an accurate understanding of what had happened, and he continued to "believe the money matters are not right." Crump said that he had nothing to confess because Potts's complaint was groundless. Brothers Peyton H. Bilbro, Robert L. Vernon, and Preston D. Weaver were appointed to a committee charged with attempting to reconcile the parties.

The matter dragged on through the next year with the committee finally reporting that reconciliation was not possible. Citing the scriptural passage of 2 Thessalonians 3:6 to "withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly," Brother Vernon introduced a resolution calling for the "excommunication" of Potts from the church. Characterizing the body as "the Devil's Church," the one specific example cited in the resolution as evidence of her derision, contempt, and unchristian spirit, did not help Potts's cause. Nevertheless, she was afforded the opportunity of defending herself, which she did with gusto. In trying to clear herself, Potts not only denied the charges but also went after her accusers, which, for her, included the pastor. This was enough for Richardson, who tried to bring the proceedings to a halt, only to be interrupted repeatedly by Potts. Richardson turned to visiting pastor Thomas H. Pritchard of First Baptist Church of Raleigh, who "rose and said that if a member of his church were to act as Mrs. P[otts] has[,] she could not remain in his church," but repeated interruptions from Mrs. Potts prevented him from continuing. Not surprisingly the vote to exclude her from the fellowship was overwhelming. There must have been no coming back; a few years later when church clerk Robert Vernon wrote the membership roll in a new minute book, he did not record Potts's name.

If the congregation drew on its understanding of Holy Scripture in its attempts to reconcile the aggrieved parties, it also depended on a set of member-



ship expectations and parliamentary procedure for the orderly conduct of church affairs. On April 6, 1873, the congregation adopted bylaws that made clear how its affairs were to be conducted. Prayer was mandated at the opening and closing of church conferences. The pastor was designated to serve as the meeting's moderator (with the senior deacon to assume the chair in the pastor's absence). All male members of the church were expected to attend the monthly conference and any special meetings or to provide an explanation for being absent. All discussions were to be conducted "with gravity and modesty and with sincere desire for the truth." The affair with Sister Potts must have tested everyone on this point. As a reminder of their beginnings, the congregation was to read the church covenant once a quarter and again whenever new members joined. Finally, beginning in January of each year, the Lord's Supper was to be observed quarterly and more often if the church so desired.

Minutes of church conferences for these years give a sense of orderliness and regularity. The congregation adopted a resolution on July 5, 1873, of "grateful acknowledgement" for the gift of an organ by Leigh Street Baptist Church of Richmond which met "a pressing demand in our church and as it comes without any solicitation on our part and as an offering from them, expressive of their sympathies and prayers for us in our struggle." The treasurer's report for the year ending August 1, 1873, showed disbursements of \$70 to the pastor and \$17.60 to the church sexton (leaving a balance of \$3.86 for church expenses!), with \$26.02 received for missions, \$5 for the Sunday School Board, and \$7 for a blind sister in the congregation. In the fall of 1873, the congregation agreed with Brother Weaver's assessment that "our pastor was the right man in the right place" and voted to retain him for another year of employment (notwithstanding the convention's earlier recommendation of permanent pastorates). The first church manuals (presumably containing the covenant and rules of order) were printed and distributed to the members.

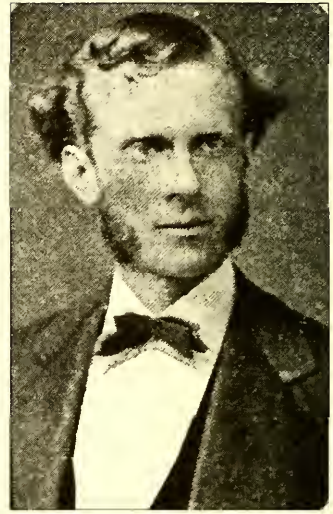
But the congregation's expressed hope of having preaching every Sunday would soon be frustrated. Delegates meeting in Wilmington, North Carolina, in November 1874 for the annual session of the Baptist State Convention elected J. B. Richardson as corresponding secretary, a position he accepted, although it meant his leaving Greensboro. Efforts by the church to call John Mitchell back to the pastorate were unsuccessful, and, so, after three years the Greensboro church, with sixty-nine members and seventy-four Sunday School pupils, was left to look for a new pastor.

Years of wandering in the wilderness followed. A string of pastors came and left after short tenures for a variety of reasons. Indebtedness remained a chronic concern as membership grew by fits and starts. In so small a congregation, even

a problem with one member could stymie growth, as when on January 17, 1875, a church committee informed founding member Peyton H. Bilbro that because he stopped attending services and meetings and failed to help pay church expenses: "The church cannot move another inch until this difficulty is removed." (After a series of vituperative meetings in which, among other charges, Bilbro claimed that the church manual was being used as a guillotine against him, the congregation acceded to Bilbro's wishes and on May 7 removed his name from the membership. As is so often the case, one yearns to know what went unrecorded that would help make better sense of these affairs.)

Certainly, having a string of short-term pastors did not help. Dr. Thomas Hume, at the time pastor of Danville Baptist Church and later a distinguished professor of English at the University of North Carolina, supplied the pulpit through much of 1875. At the end of the year, Elder Sidney F. Conrad accepted the church's call to be its pastor for an annual salary of five hundred dollars, with two hundred dollars of that amount contributed by the board of missions. Less than two years later, however, Conrad resigned, perhaps because of the strain of trying to move the church forward. Nevertheless, in that short interim, the congregation adopted on February 14, 1876, a financial plan that was important enough for it to be printed, distributed to members, and inserted into the minute book:

We, the members of **Greensboro Baptist Church**, recognizing the advantages of systematic benevolence, and believing the Scriptures to teach the same, do adopt the following as our Financial Plan, to take effect from the time of adoption, and be subject to such alterations, and changes as the church in conference may at any time see proper to make. I. That each member be required to voluntarily state how much they will give per week, for Church Expenses and Pastor's Salary, the amount with name of giver to be placed upon a list held by the treasurer of the Church.



Dr. Thomas Hume pictured in undated photograph, ca. 1870s. Hume was a familiar and greatly respected preacher who served several interim pastorates at the Greensboro church during his long career as clergyman and professor of English at the University of North Carolina. *Photograph from J. William Jones, Christ in the Camp, or Religion in the Confederate Army (1904).*

II. That a collection be taken up every Lord's day, during the morning service, for these two objects, and that the amounts given by each member of the Church be placed in an envelope for the purpose, with the name of the giver, and the amount given, printed or written upon the back of the same, and said amounts to be credited to the giver by the treasurer of the Church.

III. That each member, in case of failure to make their weekly contributions, be required to pay the same at the end of the month.

IV. That all money contributed by the congregation at large, and unnamed by the giver, be applied to the above named objects, viz: Church Expenses and Pastor's Salary, except in cases otherwise ordered by the church.

V. That a collection be taken up after every observance of the Lord's Supper, and the fund thus collected to be known as the Relief Fund of the Church, to be held by the treasurer and used by the Deacons as necessity may require.

VI. That four Public Collections be taken up during the year for the following: Home Missions, Foreign Missions, Domestic Missions, and Ministerial Missions. The year to be divided into four quarters, one quarter to each object. The collections for these objects to be at the end of each quarter, as follows:

**First—Foreign Missions**

**Second—Home Missions**

**Third—Domestic Missions**

**Fourth—Ministerial Missions**

During each quarter the members are requested to use the mite boxes, and return them at the quarterly collection.

VII. That the treasurer be required to make payment of Church Expenses and Pastor's Salary at the end of every month.

VIII. Any church member failing to comply with these regulations shall be amenable to the Church and subject to such action as it may deem prudent to take.

Other hopeful signs were evident: Elder Conrad and deacons Almer G. Newell and Dr. Henry B. Marley were appointed to arrange to have the church dedicated and insured (for \$2,500 with an annual premium of \$21.50, which Newell, Marley, and sisters Payne and Hilliard successfully raised among the membership). Work on the building's furnishings also continued as Newell, a carpenter by trade, crafted six chairs at a cost of \$24.

Even more encouraging was the church's desire to sponsor its first mission, which was located four miles east of town at Buchanan's Schoolhouse. A number of church members lived in the area, mostly Buchanan family members. A Sunday School was established on June 4, 1875, with the hope that the church's "country members" would be able to establish a mission that might possibly contribute as much as \$50 toward a pastor's salary. At a special meeting at the schoolhouse on Thursday evening, September 28, 1876, ten candidates came forward for baptism and were accepted into the membership. In November, Rev. Conrad was noted to be preaching there one Sunday a month, and, in May 1877, nineteen letters of dismission were granted to members forming the new church.

None of these developments, unfortunately, prevented unflattering reports from circulating that came to the attention of the spiritual committee. Whatever was being said, the pastor suddenly announced his resignation in a letter shared with the church conference on March 30, 1877. In his letter Conrad alludes only vaguely to the difficulties he and the congregation had encountered: "I came to you with many deficiencies as a preacher and pastor and am convinced that my work is far short of what it should have been and what I sincerely desired it to be, but whatever my shortcomings I have tried to be faithful and have earnestly sought to promote the cause we represent." Having assumed responsibility for the church's difficulties, Conrad received the thanks of



This chair, one of the few furnishings surviving the disastrous fire of 1885 that destroyed the South Elm Street church, most likely was made in 1875 by Deacon Almer G. Newell, a carpenter by trade. (Photograph courtesy Charles Hartis)

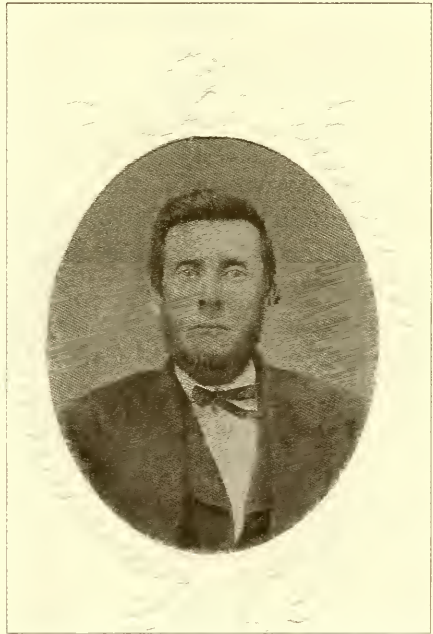


Lectern above is from the South Elm Street church. (Photograph courtesy Charles Hartis)

the congregation in a resolution offered by Sister Payne, which expressed “our sincere thanks for the zeal and faithfulness with which he had labored with and for us during the past year, sometimes under many discouragements, but it was a labor of love and will surely meet a just reward.” In a time when congregations still called their pastors on a yearly basis, Conrad’s contract was not renewed, whether at his insistence or the church’s remains unclear.

For a few months in 1877, the church benefited from the monthly preaching of Dr. William Robert Gwaltney (an introduction that would prove fortuitous a few years later), who agreed to travel from Winston to pastor the Greensboro church just as the Beulah Association planned to hold its first annual session there. Several days before the session opened, Gwaltney stressed the importance of the work of the hospitality committee “to make ample arrangements,” conference minutes for August 4, 1877, read, “for accommodating visitors and delegates,” although, unfortunately, details of how that was done did not survive. At the session church clerk Robert L. Vernon reported that twelve baptisms, one receipt by letter, and twenty-two dismissals by letter had left a total membership of sixty-one. Gwaltney was appointed to serve as the association’s sole missionary, at a salary of \$150.

Rev. Gwaltney, however, soon left Greensboro for Raleigh to accept the pastorate at the new Swain Street (Second) Baptist Church. With the help of a “Dime Sociable” sponsored by the women of the church in January 1878, unpaid portions of salaries were raised for pastors: Gwaltney (\$18), Conrad (\$35), and Richardson (\$20, which Peyton Bilbro admitted earlier he had pledged but failed to pay). Brother Crump stated at the next month’s church conference that during the interim he would be glad for a series of revival meetings to be held, which the church agreed to do for nearly a month in February 1878 (including among its guest preachers A. C. Dixon, who was emerging as one of the most prominent Baptist evangelists of the century). The church also extended a call to Henry Petty of



Dr. W. R. Gwaltney pictured in undated tintype, ca. 1860s. (North Carolina Baptist Historical Collection, Wake Forest University)

Chatham, Virginia, who supplied the pulpit on a part-time basis for a good part of 1878. Finally, early the next year, Trezevant Harrison of Apex, North Carolina, was called at a salary of five hundred dollars with the Buchanan church asked to contribute one hundred dollars of that amount. In April 1879, the Greensboro church entered its new pastor on the membership roll.

The church had busied itself with the membership roll in other ways. For whatever reason—the coming of a new pastor, the church's growing involvement in association meetings and state conventions, calls from members for additional revival meetings, and expressed worry that the roll contained the names of too many inactive members—there was a flurry of effort to ensure that the righteous clung to the straight and narrow way. The spiritual committee had much to investigate. Two sisters in the faith, for example, were rumored to be keeping a “disorderly house,” and, although no evidence was found to prove their guilt, the facts indicated “beyond question that their daily walk and conversation before the world had been disorderly and had brought reproach upon the cause of our Lord and master.” Although the older of the two women expressed sorrow, both asked that their names be withdrawn from the membership. (The son of the older woman later married the other, younger woman. Perhaps the nature of their courtship had been the problem!) In another appearance before the spiritual committee, a Christian brother admitted “that at an unguarded moment he had drank too much and got under the influence of strong drink,” for which he was sorry, pleading that he had never before been guilty of this sin and hoping the church would forgive him. The church did by unanimous vote.

At the same time two new committees were appointed. One committee saw Mrs. Jollie tending to the sick and another allowed Mrs. Dixon to seek out Baptists who had not joined the church. None of these activities, however, forestalled difficulties with the new pastor, and, on January 3, 1880, Harrison submitted his resignation. His letter obscured as much as it revealed: Harrison said he had recently learned of the concern by some in the membership that financial obligations freely entered into by the congregation could not be honored; that rumors were circulating expressing disappointment in his leadership; and that a privately expressed belief was being voiced that the church had not succeeded under his pastorate. For his part Harrison expressed a reluctance to “serve a people who cannot freely approach their pastor with anything and everything affecting the spiritual interest of themselves and the community around them.”

There was nothing to do but to search for a new pastor, and this time it took more than a year before, in June 1881, E. Furman Baldwin accepted the call.

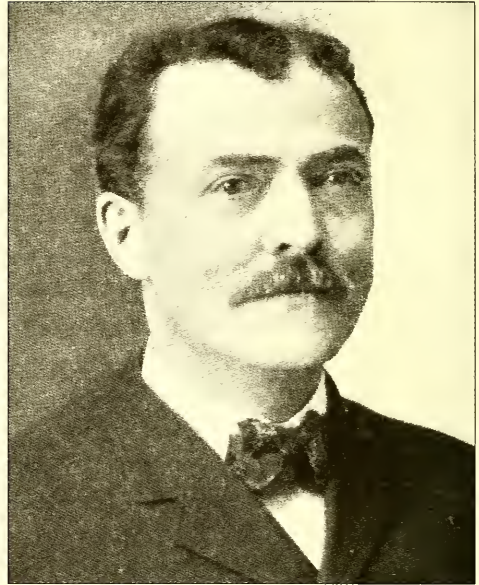
Prospects for the church began to brighten. The state convention markedly increased its financial support for Baldwin's salary, and there was renewed activity at the church as well. Tin gutters were fitted to the side of the church in December 1881 to bring water into the baptismal pool. Eighteen months after the Baldwin family arrived, Ella A. Baldwin (the pastor's wife) and Miss Laura Boner (a dressmaker before her marriage and, according to Rowe, "one of our best Sunday School teachers") were thanked for the gift of a new organ, accompanied by a matching stool given by Brother Vernon. Brother Lee M. Hawkins, proprietor of the Railroad Eating House at the Richmond and Danville Railroad Depot, offered to give enough paint to cover the church's ceiling, and Sister S. A. Dodson helped raise the cost of paying a painter (\$21.50). In 1883, Elder Baldwin presented the congregation with "a handsome communion set and two table cloths." Most remarkably, on December 2, 1882, the church appointed a committee to investigate the feasibility of procuring a lot on which to one day build a new church, which would surely be needed if baptisms continued to follow the number for February 1883, when sixteen candidates were baptized as a result of "a gracious revival of the church and the conversion of many precious souls."

Without question membership was growing, including the addition on September 1, 1883, of the twenty-one-year-old dentist and University of Maryland graduate, Walter W. Rowe. He must have been quickly drawn to Mary Dyson, the adopted daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Baldwin, whom he married two years later, because the family left town soon after Rowe's arrival. In December the pastor announced his resignation in order to accept a call to the mission field. Baldwin was making a remarkable move: with only lukewarm encouragement from the Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Baldwin visited the Kabyle Berber people of northwestern Algeria early in 1884. Convinced that this was a mission field ripe for harvest, Baldwin had both his request for support from the Foreign Mission Board and his subsequent appeal to the Southern Baptist Convention turned down, and so he returned to the Kabyles under the auspices of an English mission. The Greensboro send-off for the Baldwin family was held in the capacious auditorium of West Market Street Methodist Church.

Two years passed before Rowe would have the opportunity to wed Mary Dyson, which he did soon after her return in 1886. Securing a new pastor for the church happened more quickly, particularly as news of William R. Gwaltney's resignation in Raleigh became known. Almer Newell hustled off to Raleigh where the annual session of the Baptist State Convention was meeting with an offer for Gwaltney of a salary that included four hundred dollars from the State Mission Board, one hundred dollars from Raleigh brethren committed to see-

ing the work in Greensboro made more secure, and the assurance of seven hundred dollars from the congregation. Gwaltney, in short, was being asked to accept a call as the church's first full-time pastor. "The Greensboro Church wants a whale, but it hasn't enough water to float a minnow," snorted Columbus Durham, secretary of the State Mission Board. "Well," Rowe would write, "our 'whale' came and we floated him, taking good care of him and his family, and during his five years pastorate we not only relieved those Raleigh brethren who so generously supplemented his salary, but during the latter part of his stay we were so strengthened financially and numerically that for the first time we were able to stand on our own feet."

On January 31, 1885, the names of Rev. W. R. Gwaltney, Mrs. Amelia Gwaltney, Miss Minnie Gwaltney, Miss Mattie Gwaltney, and Miss Elma Gwaltney were read into the church membership. At that same conference Walter W. Rowe was elected the new church clerk, replacing Robert L. Vernon, who was leaving the post after twelve years of faithful service and dependable penmanship. The church was poised to move forward vigorously into a new era. No sooner had the Gwaltney family settled into their new home, however, than calamity struck, once again calling everything into question.



Dr. W. W. Rowe is pictured in undated photograph, ca. 1890s. (*Greensboro Public Library*)



# 4

## Faithful, Zealous Work

*Our dear little church stands a fitting monument of her faithful, zealous work.*

—Tribute to Mrs. Mary A. Dixon, 1890,  
by the Ladies' Missionary and Aid Society

On December 11, 1889, Mrs. Mary A. Dixon, aged fifty-one years, died of pneumonia. The Sunday School, overseen by Robert L. Vernon, her successor as superintendent, quickly adopted a resolution recognizing a sense of deeply felt loss and heartfelt sympathy for her family. A committee led by Dixon's coworker Mary A. Hiatt Payne fashioned on behalf of the Ladies' Missionary and Aid Society a "tribute of respect" resplendent in the language of the day: "Tender mother, loving sister, we shall miss thee around the fireside, in the social circle and among God's people, but in our hearts there is no void. There thy memory shall linger through the years to come like the fragrance of roses clinging long after the vase has been shattered." Dixon was remembered for her cheering presence and strengthening prayers and "her faithful, zealous work," to be cherished and emulated. In a *Biblical Recorder* article, Dr. Thomas Hume noted that when she arrived in Greensboro at the close of the Civil War, the church was "divided and cast down, but she adhered to it in evil as well as good report, and by her faithfulness and energy inspired the weak-hearted and unbelieving." In short, he concluded, "There were a few good men, but what would they have done without the steady, flaming zeal and devotion of this elect woman and her few sisters in the faith." Rev. William R. Gwaltney, the church's pastor at the time of her death, recalled that these words were among Mary Dixon's last: "I want to tell Jesus how little I have done for Him, and how much I want to do for Him."

When Sister Dixon arrived in town years earlier, Greensboro Baptists were meeting in a little, run-down brick building on South Elm Street. She worked

through years that saw the erection first of one and then, after a disastrous fire, of a second church. While Dixon may have held pride of place among church members, her loss was not the only one the church noted in these years. Familiar names like Almer G. Newell, the carpenter who made chairs for the church, and Preston D. Weaver, an active member for over twenty years whose father Amos had preached in Greensboro before the church was constituted and whose children Rufus and Charles would soon emerge as denominational leaders, also appeared in memorial resolutions. Another cherished name appeared in obituaries and memorials across the state when, on December 13, 1882, Elias Dodson died in Wilmington, North Carolina, after years of declining health.

New names came to the fore like Rowe, William Hamilton Eller, and, Ceasar Cone who was not a Christian but whose philanthropy materially aided the church's mission. The steady stream of pastors slowed with Gwaltney's tenure of nearly six years, the longest the church had ever enjoyed. Times of struggle never seemed far away, and yet, by the beginning of the new century, the church contemplated both expanded missions opportunities and the possibility of once again constructing a new and larger edifice. These later developments Mary Dixon would not see. She did, however, witness one of the most traumatic days ever experienced by her church.

The year 1885 promised to be a good one. The church had a new pastor with his large and growing family. A revised covenant had been entered into a second church minute book. Discussions had begun about enlarging and further improving the church building, which had recently been fitted for gas lighting.

Everything suddenly changed, however, as a terse, boldly written entry in the minute book underscored: "At about 4:30 a.m., on Sunday, July 26, 1885, the church was entirely destroyed by fire and there was no insurance." The fire began in the frame building serving as a general store next to the church and quickly consumed it. An anonymous eyewitness recounted what happened next: "Ladders were placed and soon scaled by some of the most agile young men." A bucket brigade was formed on the roof which included four men of the church (Mary Dixon's husband Martin among them). While they fought in vain to control the fire, others entered the building and "removed all the church furniture, seats, secretary's desk, the new organ, communion set and new carpet." Little more could be salvaged. "Hot, tired, and almost in despair, Brother Gwaltney and quite a number of his members met at a little distance from the crowd, who still lingered about the burning building, and commended us for doing our best to save the church and its contents."

A stunned congregation gathered later that morning at the nearby YMCA for worship. "It was pitiful to see the look of hopelessness upon the faces of our

faithful little band as they talked one with another about our loss," the eyewitness continued. "But, soon, Brother Gwaltney arrived and, amid the silence, he began to tell us that a Divine Power had permitted this seeming calamity to happen, and that he for one was willing to bow before the One who doeth all things well, and say, 'Not our will, but Thine be done.'" Amid fervent prayers someone handed Gwaltney a note addressed to him by David Schenck, a former superior court judge and general counsel for the Richmond and Danville Railroad living in Greensboro. "I have just passed by the spot where your little church stood," the note read, "and my heart was singularly stirred. I want to be the first to give a substantial token of my sympathy." A check accompanied the note, which the congregation took as a sign to continue God's work and to go on to even greater accomplishments. "It became manifest that we had chosen wisely in calling Brother Gwaltney as our pastor. No man could have been better fitted at this crisis to inspire the efforts of our little band."

The congregation responded to Gwaltney's leadership with alacrity. A committee was quickly charged with salvaging church furniture and looking for a place to hold Sunday School. After Mrs. Ellen D. Hundley's private school proved too small, space was rented in the YMCA and worship was held in Bogart's Hall. A building fund and committee were established; and Gwaltney's traveling expenses were paid so that he could journey around the state to raise funds. The first fruits of this labor came early; on September 27, 1885, the congregation authorized the purchase of a lot from Miss Minnie Morehead on the northwest corner of Washington and Greene Streets for two thousand dollars, with the cost to be paid by the sale of the South Elm Street property and the remaining bricks of the old church.

A month before the first anniversary of the fire, plans for the new building were reviewed and approved by the congregation. A subscription committee was charged to visit members immediately to receive all possible payments on pledges, as the biggest obstacle was the lack of funds necessary to let out contracts. (Construction was overseen by Greensboro builder Thomas Woodroofe, who would also be responsible for erecting Main building, now Faust Hall, at the State Normal and Industrial School, today's UNCG.) At a church conference on August 4, 1886, "Bro. Gwaltney suggested that a special meeting be held for seeking the Lord's blessing upon the church building, the work now burdening the hearts of the people." Nevertheless, construction must have proceeded apace with a level of confidence to match it, as the congregation unanimously agreed in November to invite the state convention to meet in Greensboro for its 1887 session. The decision was reached even after building committee member and lumberman Robert W. Brooks cautioned that without renewed funding, work

on the church would have to stop. (When the convention met in November 1886, it changed the location of its next session from Greensboro to Durham.) Indeed, by the end of the year, the church's indebtedness of \$257.08 far exceeded outstanding pledges of approximately \$150.

Final costs became apparent early in 1887. The amount paid for the lot and construction to that point totaled \$6,208.13. Most of the construction was complete, short of plastering on the interior, which would cost \$1,000. Another \$300 would be required to install seats and gaslights (not until 1894 were six "Wellsback Incandescent Lights" installed at an expense of \$11.75). Additional money was borrowed to complete the construction, canvassing the city for funds continued, and miscellaneous expenses were incurred for the purchase of items like one hundred Thomasville-made chairs (\$56 total) for overflow seating until, finally, on May 15, 1887, the new brick church, built in a Gothic Revival style with tall vertical lines and pointed arches, was dedicated. Less than two years after the calamitous fire on South Elm Street, the "West Washington Street Baptist Church" had a home as new as its name.

On April 28, 1887, shortly before the dedication, the *Morning News* of Greensboro sought to convey what many in the congregation were thinking:

Now that the new Baptist Church building is about completed, the members are looking back to the day on which the old one was burned and saying, "What hast God wrought?" They do not see how the means have been raised, nor how all this has been accomplished. They have been so fortunate in location, and in building a house so handsome and so well adapted to the work to be done. They show feelings of gratitude as they speak of the liberality of our own citizens as they have aided in the work. It seems that all the plans our Baptist

34

Sunday June 6<sup>th</sup> 1886

At a meeting held Sunday morning June 6<sup>th</sup> Bro. C. A. Thompson, Moderator, Bro. Vernon presented the plans of the new church for inspection. Bro. Vernon of Dr. News, presided by Bro. Rowe. The plans were unanimously adopted. The question in relation to the lot should have on Washington or Green St. was discussed, after a considerable discussion, a motion made by Bro. Thompson seconded by Bro. Thompson was adopted, viz. that the location be left undisturbed, the building committee Bro. C. A. Thompson stated that the most serious obstacle in the way now was the lack of funds there not being an anticipated surplus in the treasury in amount over \$1000 out the contract the church was collecting subscriptions, viz. Bro. J. D. News, Bro. J. H. News, & Bro. J. H. News were the ones by Bro. Vernon read entitled the ball was had authorized & authorized he should be seen during the coming week, the amount of the work ordered during the week, & the plan for the work. Bro. Vernon stated that the Gov. still had some for the first month and asked the question discussed whether or not we care or not, or future it was decided to see the plan possible longer with the objection to the lot that it is more economical in the use. A motion of Bro. Thompson seconded & adopted.

Clerk W. W. Rowe records in the minutes for the called meeting of Sunday, June 6, 1886, where treasurer and member of the finance committee Robert L. Vernon presented plans of the new church for inspection by the membership.

friends adopted have succeeded. Their sacrifices, which have been great, have been cheerfully made.

According to the article the church had benefited from the generosity of Baptists from across the state, with denominational leaders assuring Gwaltney of their support in the church's rebuilding efforts. Gwaltney was singled out as particularly adept at this work, having throughout his pastorates overseen building projects, including the one previous to his calling to Greensboro—where he had come in the hope of recovering from the overstrain of his earlier work!—that made the Second Baptist Church of Raleigh a rival in size and activity to Dr. Skinner's First Church.

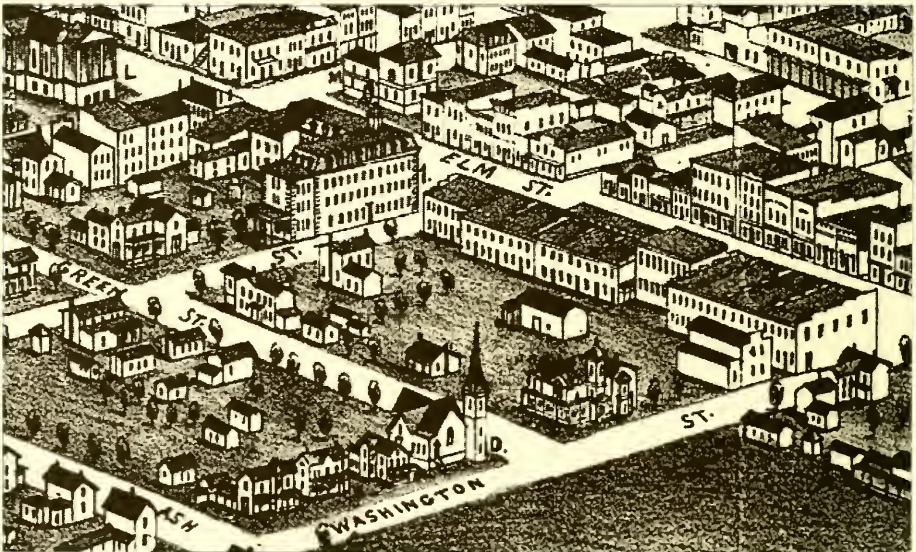
The dedication on May 15, 1887, was fulsomely described in the *Morning News*. "The weather was delightfully fine; a beautiful sunshiny day, with gently cooling breezes, enabling the ladies to turn out in their prettiest and gayest attire." Seating for nine hundred people was insufficient for the size of the crowd that filled the sanctuary. The main floor and the circular dais where the lectern stood "were splendidly carpeted in light red," while the curtain that divided the dais from the retiring room behind it was "of elegant plush and of purple hue, arranged in graceful folds." The dais was decorated with roses, lilies, and evergreens to stunning effect:

All this, combined with the variously colored but mellow light, which came streaming in through the beautifully and artistically stained panes of glass of the large Gothic windows, with their tracery heads imparted to the whole interior of the church a most pleasing appearance; it seemed, indeed, as if earth had given up its fairest greens and flowers to lend becoming enchantment to the view, and the very heavens its purest of mellow light to shed holy luster to the scene.

Miss Ollie Newell played the organ for the morning and afternoon services, with Miss Elma Gwaltney taking her place in the evening service. A choir of "over fifty well trained female and male voices" was directed "in magnificent style by Prof. Wilson." Promptly at eleven a.m., W. R. Gwaltney walked up to the lectern and requested the congregation sing the doxology. The choir then sang "Consider the Lilies" and the hymn "I Love to Tell the Story." Rev. Thomas Carrick of High Point read from 2 Chronicles 6: "I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling forever," after which Thomas Hume of the University of North Carolina delivered "a most eloquent and impressive sermon on 'The Mission of the Church,'" with a text chosen from 1 Timothy 3:15:

“That thou mayst know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” The sermon was deemed particularly fitting for “these troublous times of anarchism and socialism.” Afterward Dr. Hume, “in a most fervent prayer,” dedicated the church, asking God to support their cause and to bless the pastor, congregation, and all who worshipped there. After the choir sang “Draw Me Nearer,” Carrick urged that a generous offering toward furnishing the church with new seating be given, with \$176 being collected.

While Hume had known the church during its early days of struggle, the minister for the 3:30 afternoon service could claim to have been present at the church’s founding. Dr. Thomas E. Skinner of Raleigh, one of the three elders who formed the original presbytery that constituted the church in 1859, spoke on “Denominational Strength.” Although the newspaper account does not indicate that he referred to the Greensboro church’s past, surely his presence almost thirty years later was a reminder of how far the church had come. There was also an unrecognized look to the future, as the congregation again filled the church at 8:15 in the evening, to hear future pastor Henry W. Battle of Wadesboro speak on the “Unity of the Faith.” The final benediction was not given until the clock struck 10:00!



This detail is from “Bird’s Eye View of the City of Greensboro, North Carolina, 1891, Burleigh Lithographing Establishment” (Madison, WI: Ruger and Stoner, 1891). The church, labeled “D” on the map (lower center of detail), sits at the corner of Green[e] and Washington Streets. (*Library of Congress American Memory*)

The miracle realized at the dedication had been costly, and the strain was beginning to show as the glow of that day faded. A promissory note for \$200 that had been used to pay for windows had come due in November 1887, and there was no money to pay it. Later that month clerk W. W. Rowe wrote a letter to the convention's Mission Board pleading for increased assistance in paying the pastor's salary; otherwise Gwaltney would "have to take up some [mission] station out of Greensboro" to supplement his salary. The church building debt, Rowe reported, totaled \$600 or \$700 dollars; another \$85 had been spent on establishing a mission station at Piney Grove east of town. (The mission would last only a few years.) According to church records, the membership of 132 represented less than \$40,000 income. Even so, Rowe said that the latest association letter showed the church spending \$6,560.28 for all objects, including the new building. The congregation had actually given more toward the pastor's salary than had been pledged, but the supplemental giving by Raleigh supporters had ended, which meant that the total of \$1,200 could no longer be assured.

The board declined to increase its assistance, and as late as May 1888, deacons and members of the finance committee, who had been unsuccessful in their attempt to raise \$125.28 by visiting "delinquent" members in order to pay the pastor the remainder of his salary for 1887, held a special offering at which they contributed an additional \$82, with members of the congregation pledging to pay another \$18 that was needed within three weeks. Also helping to reduce the church's indebtedness was the sale in September 1888 of part of the West Washington Street property for \$1,000, the proceeds largely going for the installation of seating. There never seemed to be a time, however, when the church could escape such concerns, in large measure because the congregation's determination to expand its ministry exceeded its ability to raise funds.

The most visible sign of this determination was the formation of the Ladies' Missionary and Aid Society in 1886, predating the establishment of the Southern Baptist Convention's Woman's Missionary Union by two years. The society set as its object "to work faithfully for missions at home and in foreign lands and for such objects of benevolence as shall commend themselves to our Christian sympathy," and it was open to all persons who contributed one dollar per year or its equivalent in service. Its activities were varied: in January 1889, the society recorded contributing \$5.05 to China missionary Lottie Moon's first Christmas offering for missions (to which Southern Baptist churches contributed a total of \$3,315). The year's activities also included embarking on a project of sewing and selling bonnets and aprons; organizing a committee to read and report on the booklet *Chips from Many Workshops* (sent to the church by Fannie Exile Scudder Heck, president of the North Carolina chapter of the

**March.**

**Africa.**—"The souls of the needy he shall save." Missionaries, 9; native assistants, 7; stations, 8; churches, 5; membership, 166; baptisms, 24; Sunday school scholars, 170. Contributions, \$123.50.

**Study Topics.**—*The unoccupied Sudan,—its inhabitants and possibilities. How native chiefs help and hinder Mohammedan fetiches. Native helpers,—hard to obtain. Why Africa needs extra force for every field. Prejudicial changes in government, &c. The prospects,—the promises.*

**April.**

**Indians.**—"And strangers \* \* have cut him off and left him." Population of Indian Territory, including Oklahoma Indians, 60,000. Whites and Negroes, 20,000. In Ind. Ter., Okla. and W. Ark., 60 missionaries S. B. C. are at work; more are needed. Churches 301; membership, 13,844.

**Study Topics.**—*Our debt to the Indians. Are the "wards of this government eligible to citizenship in heaven?" Connection between bad traits and bad treatment of Indians. Best results from work among the young.*

**May.**

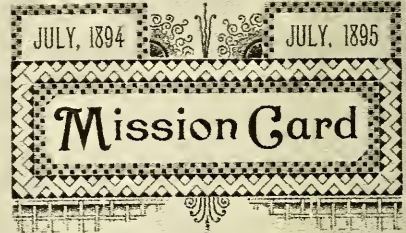
**Japan.**—"Bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." Missionaries, 4; native assistants, 4; stations, 6; churches, 1; membership, 31; baptisms, 9. Contributions, \$15.

**Study Topics.**—*Unique position of Japan among heathen nations. Uprising of Buddhism and other religions in view of Christian missions. Danger of exaggerated views of missionary success. Language and religious pre-conceptions barriers to mission effort. A Baptist opportunity.*

**June.**

**China.**—"Behold \* \* these from the land of Sinim." Missionaries 38 native assistants, 23; stations, 57; churches, 13; membership, 1,077; baptisms, 122; schools, 14; scholars, 333. Contributions, \$1,580.52.

**Study Topics.**—*The importance of China as a mission field. The work already done there. The Stations occupied by our Foreign Board. The necessity of enlargement in the work. The special value of woman's work in China. The duty of American Christians towards the Chinese in this country.*



FOR DAILY PRAYER AND STUDY.  
AND FOR USE IN MONTHLY MISSIONARY  
CONCERTS.

"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do,  
that the Father may be glorified in the Son."  
—John xiv. 13.

FIELDS AND WORK OF

**Southern Baptist Convention.**

PRICE FIFTY CENTS PER HUNDRED.

**MARYLAND BAPTIST MISSION ROOMS,**

9 WEST LEXINGTON STREET, BALTIMORE.

**Woman's Missionary Union,**

AUXILIARY TO S. B. C.

NO. 9 WEST LEXINGTON STREET, BALTIMORE, MD.



This mission card, prepared for the Southern Baptist Convention by the Woman's Missionary Union for 1894–95, was intended as a guide for daily prayer and study.

Woman's Missionary Union, and describing how to form a woman's missionary society); visiting destitute church families; donating a quilt to the orphanage in Thomasville; and debating the merits of hosting an oyster supper to raise money to buy carpet for the church.

No matter what financial difficulties the church had faced, a sense of accomplishment must have infused the congregation when the Baptist State Convention opened its annual session in Greensboro on November 14, 1888. During the four days of meetings, the convention noted the death of Matthew T. Yates, the state's pioneering missionary to China. Resolutions were approved that set goals of raising eleven thousand dollars for foreign and five thousand dollars for home missions in the coming year. The Woman's Central Committee reported the organization of Baptist children into newly organized Sunbeam Societies. Greensboro attorney and convention delegate Franklin P. Hobgood Sr.



saw his motion to add fifty thousand dollars to the endowment for Wake Forest College approved. The convention appointed a committee that included W. R. Gwaltney and future pastor Henry W. Battle to consider the feasibility of establishing a Baptist female university. The one uncomfortable moment of the session—in view of the request submitted by Dr. Rowe the previous year—may have occurred when Greensboro delegates listened to the statement of the Board of Missions that every pastor aided financially by the Board “should most earnestly urge his people toward self-support, and should not be a party to a request for aid, when it is the duty of the Church to support itself.” (Subsequent recommendations, however, that attempted to limit the amount and the length of time such aid was available were apparently stricken from the Board’s final report.) All in all, it was an impressive session that reflected the growing sense of strength and purpose among North Carolina Baptists, including those of the West Washington Street Church.

A rhythm of church life grew. Early in 1889, for example, *The Baptist Hymnal* was adopted for church use. Insurance on the church was raised from \$4,000 to \$6,000, with the congregation raising an additional \$26 to pay for the increase in premiums. Receipts of \$26.50 were gathered from a church-sponsored “lawn party” and from the previous fall’s session of the convention and were calculated into the quarterly receipts of \$365.86. Disbursements were made for postal cards, a doormat, communion wine, coal, wood, gas, and the services of a church member whose faithful work as sexton was duly noted. Four new collection baskets were ordered, but the congregation declined the expense of reprinting the church manual. Keys were given the Ladies’ Missionary and Aid Society so that its members could enter the building for weekday meetings. Old church benches were donated to the Thomasville Baptist Orphanage. New seating allowed deacons to serve with ease the whole length of the pews at communion services. Sale of a strip of land at the rear of the church property to a neighboring merchant for use as an alley provided the funds needed to pay remaining debts on the new pews and the furnace. Seventeen-year-old Lillian McDonald, granddaughter of Catharine Jollie, was hired as organist, replacing Dr. Gwaltney’s daughter Elma. A meeting of the entire membership was scheduled for Thursday evening, September 19, 1889, at which time the pastor would conduct a roll call as a way of ensuring the accuracy of the membership list. The following January 7, 1890, the roll of members (now absent the name of Mary A. Dixon), was entered by the clerk into a new, capacious church record book.

The pastor had many good reasons for thinking that much had been accomplished. In a reflective mood Gwaltney gave an interview with a reporter for the *Biblical Recorder* in the late summer of 1889. Gwaltney acknowledged in his

comments how difficult it had been to establish Baptist congregations in this “Pedobaptist Gibraltar,” where infant-baptizing Presbyterians had secured their stronghold. “We are making progress, however, for our congregations are good, and we have the best house in the place. Of course, at times it seemed to fluctuate, but it soon rallied, and now the old people of the place tell me that it is in better shape than it has ever been, and you must not forget that others have been here and toiled faithfully.” Gwaltney briefly reviewed his own work: “Then, I came here, and yonder stands our new building, and it is every dollar paid for, and my brethren have been kind enough to say of my work that every church which I have left I left it one of the best in the Association. Now this you are not to publish!” The comment was published, along with the pastor’s evaluation of his preaching, and with its reputation for relying upon “the simon-pure, unvarnished doctrines of the Bible”:

I never falter to declare the whole counsel of God, to deal with the people who come to hear me. I never go out of my way to get a doctrine, but if it is in my text I tell you I bring it out; yes, I do, and I have never had any trouble about the matter, either. That man is a coward and unfit to be a leader of men who would dodge the utterance of a truth which his Lord gave him to hand down to generations to come. You know there is a great deal of sentiment about this age. Much is said about the man that draws, and but little about the one whose work endures. Doctrines like Faith and Repentance and Baptism, and the knowledge and purpose of God, are as so many anchors, sure and steadfast, that link men to God and to a higher order of Christian work which is lasting.

The congregation’s faith in Gwaltney as “one whose work endures” must have been tested when he announced in August 1890 that he was resigning in order to return to Raleigh, where he would assume both the convention office of corresponding secretary of the Board of Ministerial Education and the pastorate of the church at Wake Forest College. “Many sad farewells were said when he and his family left our town,” according to an early historical sketch, “and a warm welcome always awaits them when they pass through our borders.” He would pass through those borders at least once more, again bringing unhappy tidings about a later pastor’s leaving, but he came knowing that he enjoyed the affection of the congregation. A month after the Gwaltney family departed, the congregation unanimously called Walter Blackwell Wingate, son of former Wake Forest College president Washington Manly Wingate, to be pastor. Wingate

accepted the call in November 1890, and soon he was preaching to large audiences in both morning and evening services.

The congregation appeared to have a singular knack for planning building campaigns just as the nation entered a business panic. This time the plan apparently began with a request presented in April 1891 by the young people of the church to add a Sunday School room annex. After seeing a preliminary sketch and estimates drawn on a blackboard in August, the congregation endorsed the idea and immediately pledged nearly \$1,000 during a large and enthusiastic meeting held on Sunday, August 30, 1891, when Wingate delivered a brief sermon and a flurry of speakers described the benefits of erecting the building. It would be eight long years before the annex was completed! Pledges as reported in February 1892 were short of the amount needed even to pay the pastor's salary; there was no money for anything else, including incidental expenses such as insurance on the building, missions activities, or back payments owed the pastor and Rufus Weaver, who supplied the pulpit during the pastor's summer vacation. Canvassing the membership helped, but in March the need for new heaters for the church added to the debt. Fifty thousand bricks for the annex were purchased and stacked on the vacant lot behind the church at the end of the year, but with the return of cold weather, there was also a leak in the gas line and furnace flues and pipes that required cleaning. When work on the annex actually began, it proceeded in fits and starts as funding gave out.

In the midst of this misery, Wingate suddenly resigned from the ministry in April 1892 to pursue a longstanding interest in business. Another brief interim followed before Charles A. G. Thomas of the Baptist church in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, accepted the call at a reduced salary of one thousand dollars. On August 21, 1892, Thomas preached "earnest sermons" in both the morning and evening services, and during the afternoon he was welcomed to Greensboro in a special service that included the participation of other pastors in the city. (Earlier that summer the congregation had accepted the invitation of Dr. Jacob Henry Smith to attend the dedication service for the newly built, Romanesque Revival-styled First Presbyterian Church. The days of hissing a Baptist in the streets seemed to have passed!)

For the first time the church signaled that it was forced to compete for people's attention with activities outside the church's purview. Resolutions were adopted in June 1893 reminding congregants that "our church services should not be allowed to take second place in our thoughts, and that we are opposed to anything coming in conflict with them." What those conflicts might be was indicated by the protest "against any entertainment of whatsoever nature, taking place at our hours for regular church & prayer meeting services," including

funerals and weddings. Fraternal societies and organizations were also asked to respect these views if they wished the church's continued support. At the same time the congregation continued to grow despite the sudden change in pastors and the onset of economic hard times. The annual church report at the August session of the Beulah Association, for example, showed a gain of twenty-six members for the previous year with a total of 208 members listed. Already enough confidence was felt in Thomas's leadership that an increase of two hundred dollars to his salary was recommended for the new associational year.

But the depression that began in 1893 would not go away. The nadir came the next year when the congregation recognized in June 1894 "the stringency of the times & the inability of our members to at present increase their subscriptions." With expenses running at close to eighteen hundred dollars, and receipts at only eleven hundred dollars, the pastor agreed to a payment schedule of twenty dollars per week, which would return his salary to what it had been when he was called two years earlier. Members were reminded of their responsibility to pledge and pay something toward the support of church objects, regardless of the amounts they could afford to give. Any member who failed or refused to offer financial support, unless excused by the finance committee or the church meeting as a whole, "shall be dealt with for covetousness, according to the provisions of [the] church manual."

Nevertheless, Charles Thomas's pastorate, though brief, pointed toward several new initiatives. Thomas himself wrote to the city's aldermen to protest the easing of restrictions on granting liquor licenses, the first time one of the church's pastors is noted to have spoken publicly on a civic issue. With his blessing the church also sent a letter to Baptist churches in the area calling for a new association to be "composed of churches within a radius of 20 or 30 miles of Greensboro," which was coming into its own as "an educational, business, and railroad centre from which radiates great influence." Thus was born, in 1894, the Piedmont Baptist Association, consisting initially of the Greensboro church together with the Reidsville, Liberty, Buchanan, and Summerfield churches. Thomas's departure in 1895 to accept the call of the Fayetteville church forestalled his involvement in these activities, but the growing congregation that had crowded the church to hear him preach continued to expand its mission in Greensboro. One of the newest members, Judge William H. Eller, then business manager of the Keeley Institute (a nationally franchised alcohol addiction sanitarium housed across the street from the church in the old Blandwood estate), would quickly emerge as one of the chief movers.

The church conference of September 1, 1895, offered a contrast between past and future. Moderating the meeting was the senior deacon, Robert L. Vernon,

one of Dr. Richardson's most dependable congregants and for many years the church clerk and treasurer. Earnest prayer for divine guidance was offered by Dr. Thomas Hume, who had filled the pulpit in 1875 after Richardson left Greensboro and had preached again at the 1887 dedication of the West Washington Street Church. The purpose of the meeting, however, was anything but nostalgic. A unanimous call was about to be issued to a prospective pastor named Livingston Johnson of the Baptist church in Lumberton, North Carolina. Johnson visited the church a few days later, when he preached "an earnest and edifying sermon." After discussions about his ministry field and salary, Johnson accepted the call. His five years in Greensboro would later be recalled with affection by both him and the congregation and also helped to form a link with J. Clyde Turner.



Livingston Johnson pictured in undated photo, ca. 1900. (*North Carolina Baptist Historical Collection, Wake Forest University*)

These years also marked dramatic developments in home missions. (The Baptist State Convention, which again convened in Greensboro for its 1895 session, had divided the Board of Missions and Sunday Schools into two separate organizations.) Early in 1896, a committee was appointed to work with the church's newly organized Baptist Young People's Union to establish a mission at the northern edge of Greensboro near Proximity Cotton Mill, the denim mill being constructed by Moses and Ceasar Cone. The latter had donated in March a building lot in the mill village for a church building. The North Side Sunday School was quickly organized (with Rowe as its superintendent), and the church's building committee reported a plan that would build a 350-seat chapel for an estimated \$750. W. H. Eller was asked to help with the Wednesday prayer meeting and the Sunday evening service until the missionary appointed by the state mission board could take charge (for a salary of \$500, one hundred of which Greensboro would be responsible for providing). On Sunday afternoon, April 11, 1897, a year after the Sunday School had been organized, the Cherry Street Baptist Church was constituted when Brother Johnson met with twenty-one members and their new pastor to adopt articles of faith and read the covenant.

Eller was one of a handful of members who transferred their letters to the new church; and before the end of the year, he was elected pastor, a position he respectfully declined. An 1870 graduate of the Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, Eller had left the ministry to pursue a career in law that included his election to the supreme court in his adopted state of Nebraska; hence the title "Judge," by which he was addressed after he returned to North Carolina in 1890 to oversee the Keeley Institute, which operated treatment centers in both states. Working as a missionary for the Piedmont Baptist Association, Eller's passion was for starting new churches, and his name would eventually be associated with eleven churches in Greensboro.

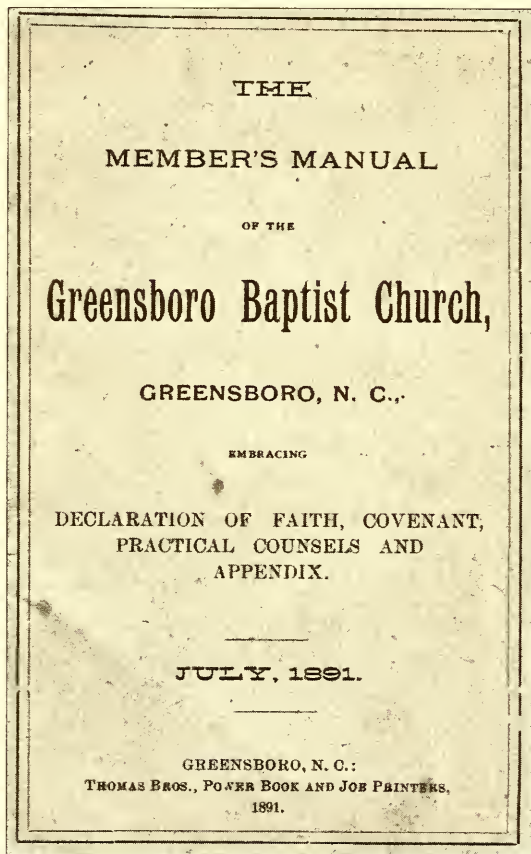
There was more mission work: the pastor together with Sunday School superintendent Robert W. "Bob" Brooks reported to deacons that a group of Baptists living in the vicinity of the Hucomuga Cotton Mills on South Elm Street was eager to organize a Sunday School. Judge Eller remembered in the spring of 1899 "an ideal day, calm, bright and hardly a cloud to deflect the horizon" as he and other church members gathered to help launch the classes "with songs and prayers and reading the scriptures." With the group meeting temporarily in a vacant grocery store, Eller recounted that, "Tuesday nights were given to prayer service; sufficient funds were easily collected for seats and lights. We even used an obstructing old counter as a sort of entrenchment and the room was so small that brother Causey's Bible class had to coop up under the awning and [the] infant class the outside rear." In May 1899, Brooks described a Sunday School with eighty members regularly in attendance, providing a sufficient basis for South Elm Street Baptist Church, which was soon constituted. When it moved toward the edge of town at the intersection of South Elm and East Whittington Streets, the young church changed its name to Southside Baptist Church. (In 1906, the church moved to Asheboro Street and again changed its name to match its location.)

In an unpublished memoir written for her children soon after husband Livingston Johnson's death in 1931, Fannie Memory Johnson recalled how her entire family had been interested in the building of the Cherry Street chapel. Her observations captured the spirit of growth that increasingly characterized the church:

At prayers father never failed to pray that the money would be provided to build the chapel. I had not realized before that the children understood the need, and know how deeply interested we were. The good Lord blessed the work of building the mission church, because quite a number were built some years afterwards, and missionary so-

cieties were established in each one of them. Once during an associational meeting in Greensboro, when Mrs. [Lillian] Murchison was giving the number of societies organized in the city, Miss [Fannie E. S.] Heck seemed surprised at so large a number.

Back on West Washington Street, Dr. Johnson was urging the congregation to complete work on the new Sunday School room. In September 1899, the treasurer reported the debt of \$72.99, the smallest deficit known in the church's recent history. Robert L. Vernon and his wife Virginia received the congregation's blessing to place in the church a large memorial window for their son, Robert W. Vernon, who had died of typhoid. After fourteen years Dr. Rowe resigned as clerk in August 1899, although he would remain active in the church for much longer. Active in a less uplifting way that summer was a brother in the faith who was reported intoxicated on a Sunday School excursion to Raleigh. He initially denied the charge, but later apologized, and was forgiven for bringing reproach upon the church. Rowe introduced a resolution condemning the church for not taking notice of "certain worldly amusement" in which some members engaged to the detriment of themselves and others, and in violation of the church's



The Member's Manual of the Greensboro Baptist Church, July 1891. After recording a series of incidents in April 1890 in which church members had been disciplined for infractions of the church manual, Clerk W. W. Rowe expressed his opinion that many of the violations were committed out of ignorance because there were no longer copies of the manual to put into members' hands. Manuals like this one, printed during the period 1874-1906, contained a declaration of faith, church covenant, constitution, "practical counsels" on issues such as keeping the Sabbath, information on baptism and communion, and a list of church members.

“solemn covenant.” Dancing, card playing, and attending the circus and the theater were deemed especially pernicious.

The 1900 session of the Baptist State Convention met in Raleigh. There Dr. Johnson was approached by W. R. Gwaltney, who informed him that, regardless of how much Johnson had previously discouraged the idea, he was about to be nominated as corresponding secretary of the convention. “I did not want to leave Greensboro,” Johnson wrote in an autobiographical sketch, “and tried to get in touch with one of the brethren over the phone, but could not get the connection which, as I look back upon it, was providential, as pressure from Greensboro would have made it harder for me to decide to leave, if, indeed, it would not have led me to decline the call to the secretaryship.” Johnson had been accompanied to the convention by two deacons, R. W. Brooks and James Yadkin Joyner, professor of English and dean of the faculty of the State Normal and Industrial Institute and soon to be state superintendent of public instruction. “While both expressed regret that I had been elected, they were convinced that the ‘Unseen Hand’ was leader and could not advise me to decline,” and so Johnson was left with one favor to ask as he accepted the convention’s election: that on his way back from Raleigh to Hickory, Gwaltney stop in Greensboro and explain the situation. “I do not believe there was ever a more delightful pastoral relationship,” Johnson concluded of his own tenure, “and one the breaking of whose ties was harder.”

Gwaltney obliged, making “a most excellent talk” to the congregation at the Wednesday evening prayer meeting of December 12, 1900. In his letter of resignation, Johnson confessed, “It pains me to see you grieved that these happy relations must be dissolved, and yet it would

We are indebted to Mr. and Mrs. John Thomas for a sample of the cards that were used something like forty years ago. It was in the days when the building stood on the corner of S. Greene and W. Washington Sts., and was called West Washington Street Baptist Church.

WEST WASHINGTON STREET BAPTIST CHURCH  
GREENSBORO, N. C.

To the Members of the Finance Committee:

I hereby agree to give the amounts marked on this card for the different objects of the church for the year beginning \_\_\_\_\_

*Pastor's Salary and Incidentals*  
\$..... per year, payable weekly.

*Orphanage*  
\$..... per year, to be paid every six months.

*Poor*  
\$..... per year, paid monthly.

*Missions*  
\$..... per year, to be paid monthly.

Name.....

Residence No. and Street.....

Please fill out blanks and drop in basket or give to some member of the Finance Committee at once.

We are pledged to raise for Pastor's Salary and Incidentals..... \$1,500  
For Missions, Poor and Orphanage ..... 300

Total ..... \$1,800

W. W. ROWE, Treasurcr.  
J. S. MOORE, Asst. Treas.

Shown is design of pledge card, ca. 1900. This illustration appeared in the church bulletin for February 11, 1940.



grieve me if it did not cost you pain. It is a great comfort to me to be able to say that I cherish for every member of this church feelings of warmest affection." At the close of the meeting, "the members crowded around their pastor to reassure him of their love and sympathy. Dr. Johnson said that he and his wife suffered more than any other because of this sad separation." A few weeks later the church adopted resolutions of gratitude which recognized that "we have experienced growth both spiritually and numerically in our own church and have established in our city mission points and have seen these grow into active churches."

Johnson left, but his work continued to bless the church. In 1903, he presided at the ordination service of J. Clyde Turner in Statesville, North Carolina. Five years later he conducted the wedding of Turner and Bertha Hicks (who had been baptized by J. L. White, soon afterward the church's pastor). Many years later, Turner would publicly express his gratitude for Livingston Johnson by leading mourners at Johnson's funeral in Raleigh, where the former convention officer and editor of the *Biblical Recorder* had resided.

Little time was required to secure a new pastor, as William Carey Newton at the Goldsboro church accepted the church's call in February 1901. A young man (he would be ninety-three at the time of his death in 1966), Newton was about to embark on a long career as a missionary in China, and so his time in Greensboro lasted only two years. (Newton successfully appealed to the Piedmont Baptist Association for financial support after the Foreign Mission Board found itself regretfully unable to send him. He and his family kept their church membership in Greensboro for many years afterward, with the congregation assuming his entire support in the years before he retired.) Once again the church would search for a pastor. When, early in 1903, the congregation accepted the recommendation of a candidate from the pulpit committee, it would embark on a period of unimagined growth and, with it, a return of financial difficulties.



A Fellowship for the Furtherance of the Gospel.

## Washington Street Baptist Church.

GREENSBORO, N. C.

W. CAREY NEWTON, Pastor.

Pictured is the church bulletin for Sunday, May 12, 1901. The photograph of the West Washington Street Church is the only view known to have survived. (*Greensboro Public Library*)

In the interim, property purchased years earlier by Dr. Gwaltney was deeded to a new Baptist church in Gibsonville, North Carolina. The Cherry Street Church moved a few blocks into the Proximity neighborhood to a new property given in exchange by Ceasar Cone and would now be known as the Walnut Street Baptist Church. Consequently, a new name was also in order for the church on West Washington Street. In October 1902 a resolution brought by Charles E. Holton, chorister and member of the pulpit committee (and husband to Catharine Jollie's daughter Rosa) was approved, thus changing the name to the First Baptist Church of Greensboro.

**SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP.**

"Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul."

Sunday Morning, May 12th, 1901.

|  |  |                           |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| <p><b>ORGAN PRELUDE.</b></p> <p><b>34</b></p> <p>1 To thy temple I repair ;<br/>Lord, I love to worship there,<br/>When within the veil I meet<br/>Christ before the mercy-seat.</p> <p>2 While thy glorious praise is sung,<br/>Touch my lips, unloose my tongue,<br/>That my joyful soul may bl as<br/>Thee, the Lord my Righteousness.</p> <p><b>SCRIPTURE LESSON.</b></p> <p><b>711</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Gloria Patri.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,<br/>As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,<br/>World without end. Amen. Amen.</p> <p><b>PRAYER.</b></p> <p><b>SOLO.</b></p> <p><b>196</b></p> <p>1 Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,<br/>With all thy quickening powers,<br/>Kindle a flame of sacred love<br/>In these cold hearts of ours.</p> <p>2 Look! how we grovel here below,<br/>Fond of these earthly toys;<br/>Our souls can neither fly nor go<br/>To reach eternal joys.</p> <p><b>SERMON:—"The Time of Christ's Second Coming."</b></p> <p><b>609</b></p> <p>1 On the mountain's top appearing,<br/>Lo! the sacred herald stands,<br/>Welcome news to Zion bearing,—<br/>Zion, long in hostile lands:<br/>Mourning captive,<br/>God himself will lose thy bands.</p> <p>2 Has thy night been long and mournful<br/>Have thy friends unfaithful proved?<br/>Have thy foes been proud and scornful,<br/>By thy sighs and tears unmoved?<br/>Cease thy mourning;<br/>Zion still is well beloved.</p> <p><b>PRAYER.</b></p> | <p><b>DOXOLOGY.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pleyel's Hymn.</p> <p>3 While the prayers of saints ascend,<br/>God of love, to mine attend;<br/>Hear me, for thy Spirit pleads;<br/>Hear, for Jesus' intercedes.</p> <p>4 While I hearken to thy law,<br/>Fill my soul with humble awe,<br/>Till thy gospel bring to me<br/>Life and immortality.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Gloria Patri.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OFFERING FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF THE CHURCH.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Balerna.</b></p> <p>3 In vain we tune our formal songs;<br/>In vain we strive to rise;<br/>Hosannas languish on our tongues,<br/>And our devotion dies.</p> <p>5 Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove,<br/>With all thy quickening powers;<br/>Come, shed abroad a Saviour's love,<br/>And that shall kindle ours.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Zion.</p> <p>3 God, thy God, will now restore thee:<br/>He himself appears thy Friend;<br/>All thy foes shall flee before thee;<br/>Here thy boasts and triumphs end.<br/>Great deliverance<br/>Zion's King will surely send,</p> <p>4 Enemies no more shall trouble,<br/>All thy wrongs shall be redressed;<br/>For thy shame thou shalt have double;<br/>In thy Maker's favor blessed;<br/>All thy conflicts<br/>And in everlasting rest.</p> <p><b>BENEDICTION.</b></p> | <p><b>INVOCATION.</b></p> |
|--|--|---------------------------|

The order of service for Sunday, May 12, 1901 lists Pastor W. Carey Newton as the preacher. Newton, who spent most of his career as a missionary in China, would live long enough to see the church move first to West Market Street and then to West Friendly Avenue. (Greensboro Public Library)

# 5

## Unprecedented Achievement

*Four years of unprecedented achievement in the cause of our Lord and Master.*

—Dr. Henry W. Battle

When Deacon John C. Murchison, his wife Lillian, and their four children moved to Wilmington, North Carolina, in the spring of 1907, the congregation voted resolutions of thanksgiving for what the family had meant to First Baptist Church. Brother and Sister Murchison were described as “two of our most valued and faithful members.” John Murchison would be missed as “our brother in our councils, modest and unassuming in manner, yet firm in his convictions, and always ready to champion a cause which he considered right.” Train master for the Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Railroad, Murchison had found his bride in the church soon after he joined in June 1889. Ordained a deacon with the assistance of former pastor Livingston Johnson in July 1903, Murchison had also served as the church’s financial secretary. Lillian Murchison had been active in the church since at least 1889 as well, when at age seventeen she was elected organist. In later years, she was vice president for the Piedmont Baptist Association at a time when, according to W. H. Eller, total giving by the association amounted to an unprecedented \$471.37. Fannie Johnson remembered how impressed Fannie E. S. Heck had been by the number of missionary societies Mrs. Murchison reported operating in the city. Now, upon leaving the church in 1907, the congregation said about her, “That Sister Murchison being a member of one of the oldest families connected with the Church, it is therefore proper to embody in these resolutions the fact; that the spirit of loyalty to Church and Denomination, manifested by her Grandmother and Mother during the early struggles of our cause in Greensboro, was also exemplified in Sister Murchison’s character.”

Lillian Murchison’s mother was Rosa Holton, wife of Charles E. Holton, and one of the first members of the Ladies’ Missionary and Aid Society. As a mem-

ber of this society Rosa had been part of the committee charged with writing the tribute to Mary A. Dixon. Rosa's mother and Lillian's grandmother, whose name is mentioned even before the founding of the church, was Catharine Jollie. In commending "our dear Brother and Sister, and their family" to the "tender watchcare" of the Wilmington church, First Baptist recognized the distance traveled not in miles, but in time. Theirs was no longer a small group of women meeting without a church home, but one of more than three hundred members gathered in a new and imposing sanctuary situated on West Market Street.

The church that was now first among equals of Baptists in Greensboro would witness much in 1907. Just before the new year, the church hosted for the third time the annual session of the Baptist State Convention, and it did so in a nearly completed building that had been designed and constructed in less than a year's time at huge expense. In fact, the \$50,000 it took to build the new facility on West Market Street created an indebtedness that roiled the congregation. The West End Mission, initiated at the same time as pledging began for erecting the new church, reached fruition in 1907 as Forest Avenue Baptist Church, located next to the State Normal and Industrial College, was dedicated. That same year the pastor who had been involved in these projects, Henry W. Battle, resigned; and the former pastor who had come to be loved for his steadfastness in the aftermath of the disastrous fire on South Elm Street, William R. Gwaltney, died.

The array of possibilities for growth and ministry and the pace of change that challenged the church at this moment must have been exhilarating and dizzying. How was it that in the early years of the twentieth century First Baptist appeared suddenly to emerge as a leading church in the state convention?

In some ways, of course, nothing so dramatic had happened; the church had steadily benefited for a number of years from dynamic leadership, both pastoral and lay, as Livingston and Fannie Johnson and John and Lillian Murchison could attest. And as a city Greensboro was growing rapidly and had gained enormously from the confluence of its manufacturing enterprises, transportation links, and educational opportunities.

There was also excitement at the church. In 1902, for the second time in the still young twentieth century, the congregation was required to call a pastor. This time the church stumbled, at least initially. The redoubtable Dr. Rowe chaired the pulpit committee, and he reported to a special church conference early the next year that Dr. Henry W. Battle of Petersburg, Virginia, had come to an agreement with the committee on terms of employment and would in all probability accept "a cordial and practically unanimous call." Unfortunately, Rowe did not think the church could afford to offer a salary of two thousand dollars with a vacation of six weeks, and so the congregation was presented with

the dilemma of choosing between majority and minority reports from the pulpit committee! James Y. Joyner spoke highly of Battle as both preacher and pastor and concluded that the church would be fortunate were he to accept a call. The vote on Battle, however, was split, with seventy-five in favor and twenty-three against. Professor Joyner asked for a second vote in order to allow those who had first been in doubt now to express their confidence in the majority, with the result being eighty-six yeas and seven nays. Joyner was off to Petersburg with the news.

Not surprisingly, Dr. Battle was fully apprised of the situation, and apparently he hesitated in accepting the call because the church adopted a resolution affirming its decision and pledging its loyal support. Now it was Dr. Rowe who was on the defensive, as he explained in a February 1903 letter to the congregation, stating that he “was and am extremely sorry that I wrote anything to wound the feelings of such a good and noble Christian gentleman and I have done what I could to counteract this injury to his feelings.” Deacons expressed their “utmost confidence” in Rowe’s “honor and integrity.” They felt it needed to be clearly stated, as unsavory reports had been circulated regarding his motives and sincerity and believing he had acted “only by an earnest desire to discharge what he believed to be his Christian duty.” Furthermore, “the bonds of love and confidence existing between the Deacons of this church has never been severed” and was exemplified by their appreciation of Rowe’s “love and sacrifice” during his many years of faithful service.

The breach was healed, and on Sunday, February 22, 1903, the congregation heard read from the pulpit Dr. Battle’s response. “The cordiality and unanimity with which you have urged me to become your pastor has touched my heart,” Battle wrote. “It has seemed to me that the Spirit, whose guidance I have continually sought, has, in this most important matter, led me into the truth; and I, therefore, assume the sacred and responsible relationship of Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Greensboro in the firm conviction that I am thus fulfilling His blessed will.” Urging his new congregants to forget the things which lay behind them, he declared that he looked forward to the time when together they would “press towards the mark.” A breach in which honest disagreement had been made more difficult by false reports was healed, but it would not be the last time that Dr. Battle found himself at odds with some part of the congregation.

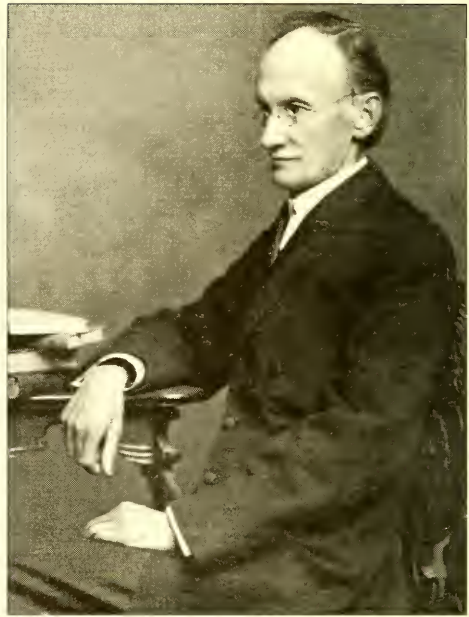
Meanwhile, exciting work was afoot as the pastor and his wife, daughter, and father (former Confederate general from Alabama, Cullen A. Battle) moved into the newly purchased parsonage on West Washington Street. The congregation heard “a long and interesting” letter written from China by former pastor W. Carey Newton. Dr. Battle appointed a set of committees to look after associa-

tional objects: state missions, orphanage, ministerial relief, ministerial education, home missions, foreign missions, and fellowship fund. Dr. Rowe and A. Wayland Cooke were asked to confer with John Mitchell and J. B. Richardson for assistance in writing a memorial for Mary A. Dixon and the recently deceased Mary Hiatt Payne.

A flavor of Dr. Battle's preaching can be had from one of his Sunday evening sermons, reprinted as a tract. "An Indictment of the Cigarette Habit" was preached on the evening of September 10, 1905, and represents an early example of sermonizing on a controversial topic of the day. The sermon's Scripture verse was Isaiah 29:9:

"Tarry ye and wonder; take your pleasure and be blind: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink." Nicotine was the substance causing the staggering, in part, Battle argued in his sermon, because it injures the body. At this point the preacher resorted to a graphic illustration: he held up before the congregation a handkerchief into which cigarette smoke had been blown, leaving dark stains, suggestive of what nicotine did to a smoker's lungs. The cigarette habit was also hurtful of the mind, and Battle described how the "cigarette fiend" (the terminology is the same as that used to describe morphine or opium addicts of the day) leads to loss of memory, concentration, and industry. Finally, smoking undermined the moral nature, as evidenced by the addict who "will lie and steal just as a morphine fiend will lie and steal." Battle quoted "a leading manufacturer" who described to him a scene he had witnessed in town on Saturday:

I saw seven little boys marching along yesterday, and each one of them was puffing away on a cigarette with a hardihood and indifference to observation which showed conclusively that it was no new employment they were engaged in. I judge the youngest was not much more than six years of age and the oldest was not over thirteen.



Henry W. Battle pictured in undated photograph, ca. 1900.

Battle asked his congregation if they could recognize the signs of addiction in “these little fellows,” the tense features and unnatural glimmer in the eyes of youngsters, “who, spasmodically clutching a cigarette stump in his little hand, accosted you with the multitudinous request, ‘Give me a match, Mister?’ Oh the infinite pity of it!” Battle concluded by wanting to know if parents in the congregation were neglecting to exercise diligent care over their child. The pronoun reference seemed to implicate fathers: “I tell him that God will hold him responsible! He may be more to blame than his poor narcotized boy.”

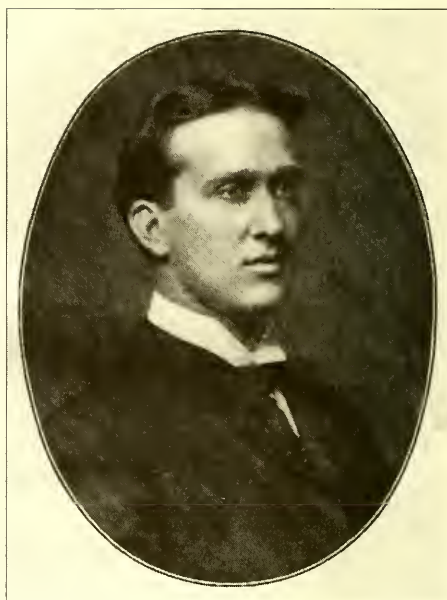
As exciting as such a sermon must have been (and one longs to know how many squirming fathers were sitting in the congregation that evening and whose idea it was to reprint this particular sermon), the most intriguing development in the church occurred late in 1905 as the congregation began to consider a new missions opportunity. Surely it helped that in November finances were judged to be in good condition, the result of 250 contributing members who gave according to a “freewill” system that was expected to result in an increase of five dollars each Sunday over the previous year’s emphasis on tithing. Simultaneously, plans were being made to begin a mission in the West End area of town, near the State Normal and Industrial College. A lot was purchased for nine hundred dollars within site of the college on Kildare—soon renamed Forest—Avenue, just south of Spring Garden Street, and a nearby store building was rented as a temporary meeting place. From Raleigh, Livingston Johnson was working to secure the appointment of a pastor. “I do not believe there is in North Carolina another field so full of promise,” he wrote the seminarian he had in mind for the post. “To show you the estimate the Board has of its importance, they appropriated to it \$500 which is the largest appropriation they ever made to any one place. I am sure I would not advise you to undertake a work that I did not believe would succeed, but my opinion is that you will miss a great opportunity if you decline this offer.”

The candidate did not decline. At a special meeting on December 30, 1905, the name of Charles E. Maddry, who was completing his studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, was presented to the congregation as the missionary who would take the lead in organizing the new church. “I have been here just two months,” Maddry wrote soon after his arrival in Greensboro, “and I will give you my impression of the Baptist outlook in Greensboro. I have never seen such a spirit of determination and unity shown by a people as manifested by the Baptists of this city.”

The members of First Baptist were introduced to Maddry by Dr. Battle at a church conference on February 28, 1906, that Battle described as being “of unusual importance.” Maddry “then made an earnest, thrilling talk in favor of or-

ganizing at once the West End Church." His reception was enthusiastic, with Brother William E. Harrison capturing the sense of the moment by commenting that, "The contrast between the wonderful work done by the other two leading denominations and the lack of interest hithertofore by the Baptists is appalling; and this great opportunity must be seized at once." Deacon Azor Shell in particular had worked for the past two years in seeing an active mission begun in this area. Dr. Battle's only regret was with the small numbers present at the meeting, but he was convinced that "the prayers of the living and dead were about to be answered by God giving his smile and approval and a work by which Baptists might have the recognition they deserve in this city."

On the afternoon of Sunday, March 11, 1906, Forest Avenue Baptist Church was constituted in the chapel of Normal College, with Henry W. Battle moderating the presbytery and Livingston Johnson preaching in the morning service and now helping to examine and approve the new church's declaration of faith and covenant. Forty-six charter members, some coming from First Baptist and others from the mission's neighborhood (an area where Peyton and Mary Bilbro had once lived), had made this church



Charles E. Maddy shown in undated photograph, ca. 1900. Maddy enjoyed a long career, especially in missions work, and later served as executive secretary of the Foreign Mission Board.



In November 1905, deacons O. Joe Howard and Azor Shell secured a license for preaching in H. M. Howard's store near the railroad on Kildare (later Forest) Avenue, close to the lot that had been purchased by the church for a new "West End" mission that would soon be constituted as Forest Avenue Baptist Church. (*College Park Baptist Church*)



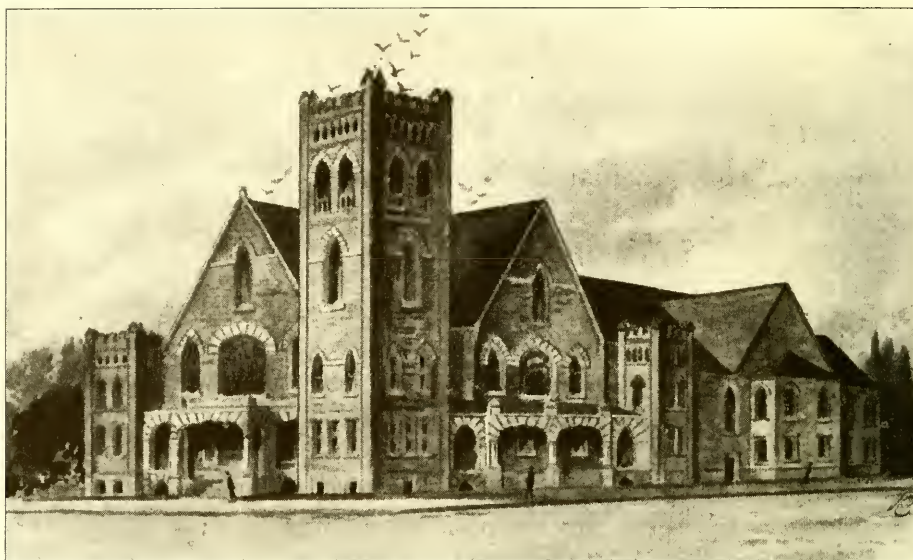
possible. More than three thousand dollars was subscribed that afternoon for the new enterprise. In the evening after preaching, Charles Maddry baptized the first seven additions to the congregation.

A church now old enough to witness the rising up of daughter churches was changing in other ways as well. Typed and purple-colored mimeographed sheets began to appear in the church minute book. The congregation decided in March 1904 to replace the single, shared communion cup with individual ones—the vote was forty-seven in favor to four against. Deacons directed that 160 cups be purchased at a cost of \$24.50. (The old communion set, perhaps the one presented to the church years earlier by E. F. Baldwin, was donated to Southside Baptist Church when it relocated to Asheboro Street in 1906.) A "Mr. Johnson" was invited in February 1906 to give his moving picture entertainment, "A Pilgrim's Progress," at the church.

Nothing could compare, however, with the question put to a special meeting of the congregation on January 7, 1906, when Lee H. Battle, deacon, Sunday School superintendent, and Greensboro banker, stated his intention to ascertain if the congregation was willing to pledge itself to the work of erecting a new church building and if \$15,000 could be pledged toward the project. It must have been a breathtaking question posed at an opportune moment. The congregation approved a resolution that called for either the remodeling of the old

|                          |     |      |     | Oct. 4, 1905. |            |
|--------------------------|-----|------|-----|---------------|------------|
| ANNUAL REPORT.           |     |      |     |               |            |
| Paid Debts this year,    |     |      |     | 710           | 40         |
| Incidental Expenses,     |     |      |     | 509           | 49         |
| Pastor's Salary,         |     |      |     | <u>2000</u>   | <u>00</u>  |
|                          |     |      |     |               | 3219 89    |
|                          | MIS | SOCS | GR  |               |            |
| State Missions,          | 89  | 15   | 210 | 85            | 300 00     |
| Foreign "                | 71  | 25   | 208 | 07            | 279 32     |
| Home Missions,           | 73  | 25   | 54  | 30            | 127 55     |
| Orphanage,               | 5   | 00   | 195 |               | 200 00     |
| Fellowship,              |     |      |     |               | 132 53     |
| Ministerial Relief,      |     |      |     |               | 25 00      |
| " Education,             | WFC |      |     |               | 25 00      |
| " " 2 yrs Seminary,      |     |      |     |               | 50 00      |
| Murphy School,           |     |      |     |               | 44 55      |
| Wood Memorial, Marshall, | 5   | 55   |     | <u>5</u>      | <u>55</u>  |
|                          |     |      |     |               | 1189 50    |
|                          |     |      |     |               | \$4409 39. |

When the annual report for 1905 was prepared, church finances were seen as good—a situation that would quickly change as the church simultaneously undertook to build a modern facility and sponsor a mission in Greensboro's West End.



Architect Sidney W. Foulk (originally of New Castle, Pennsylvania) employed a Gothic Revival style in his 1906 design of First Baptist Church on West Market Street that contrasted greatly with the old church on Washington Street.

church or the building of a new one, with \$15,000 to be secured through pledges payable quarterly across three years. The pastor quickly secured pledges totaling \$12,473. By the end of February, the church had agreed to the advisability of moving the church's location, assuming the old property could be disposed of at a suitable price, and soon an option was secured on an "admirable lot" known as the "old Winstead place" on West Market Street. The lot could be purchased for \$6,000; if the present church building and its lot could be sold for \$15,000, there would be a profit that could go toward new construction. Possibly the pews, and certainly the Vernon memorial window, would be salvaged for the new church.

The work progressed rapidly. The architects Sidney W. Foulk & Son drew up plans. The firm had also designed West Market Street Methodist Church in 1892 and was working on plans for the Forest Avenue church. As construction bids were solicited, the building committee promised to hold costs to less than thirty-two thousand dollars, if possible; but it was apparent by the end of the year that this amount was woefully short. Still, on March 18, the congregation accepted the committee's report and voted to move forward with the purchase of the Winstead property, promising to pay Mrs. Mariah A. Winstead (widow of banker James M. Winstead) thirty dollars a month for the remainder of her life.

The fact that the Forest Avenue congregation was also busy with constructing their own house of worship makes the level of activity among Greensboro Baptists even more remarkable. Their building, constructed of brick and consisting of a main auditorium accommodating 350 persons and eleven Sunday School rooms, neared completion on August 12, 1906, when the congregation first used it for worship. Financial assistance from the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention aided the church, as did the deed-ing of the property debt-free by First Baptist on May 11, 1906.

Across town, First Baptist's building project was gathering momentum. On March 23, 1906, the day the construction contract was let to Winningham and Fries of Greensboro, the *Daily Industrial News* ran a description of the

church to be erected on West Market Street with the headline, "Baptists Will Build \$35,000 Edifice Here." Construction began on May 2, with the new building's footprint measuring 135 by 87 feet. The pressed brick exterior was trimmed with Indiana Limestone. Three towers adorned the building, the tallest 85 feet and containing the pastor's study and the music room. The main auditorium, with dimensions of 62 by 62 feet, opened through a sliding wooden door into a Sunday School room of 39 by 44 feet, all of which would allow for the seating of approximately two thousand people. The Sunday School annex would contain twenty-three individual classrooms and include a ladies' parlor and a primary classroom. The facility would be warmed by a steam furnace and lighted with electricity. "Ample toilet accommodations" were planned for the basement. An organ costing five thousand dollars would be installed behind the rostrum, the intention of the membership being, according to the newspaper, "to provide one of the best and most thoroughly equipped pipe organs in the city, which will be run by electricity." The baptistery would be of white marble and the floors carpeted in red, with "hardwood pews of the latest and most approved pattern" to be installed.



Forest Avenue Baptist Church, shown in undated photograph, before 1940. This building served the Forest Avenue congregation from 1907 until its move in 1940 to the corner of Aycock Street and Walker Avenue. (*College Park Baptist Church*)

Although inclement weather and delays in shipment of materials lost the contractors two months of construction time, work proceeded apace; and by September 30, 1906, the building committee reported to the congregation that the church could be occupied by the beginning of December. An agreement was also reached with Grace Methodist Protestant Church to sell the West Washington Street property and building (except for the Vernon Memorial Window, a vocalion, piano, organ, and two small tables) for \$12,500 upon delivery of the deed on December 1, 1906.

The church was about to have a new home, and it was also about to encounter financial difficulties. Although the church conference in August 1906 indicated that pledges to the association had increased by twenty-five percent, a large deficit in giving was reported the next month and was blamed on the freewill system of giving adopted the previous year. The church's position was put into sharp relief with two sets of resolutions adopted by two congregations in November 1906. On November 11, Forest Avenue Baptist Church unanimously voted resolutions expressing the congregation's "deep sense of gratitude and loving appreciation" for the considerable aid in securing a building lot on Forest Avenue and in erecting a house of worship there. "We appreciate this all the more when we remember that you are in the midst of a building operation which will require a large expenditure of money. We rejoice with you in your splendid outlook for the future and pray God's richest blessings upon all your undertakings." The undertaking that most immediately confronted deacons at First Baptist, however, was contained in a letter addressed by them to the Penn Mutual Life Insurance Company on November 18, stating that the congregation had approved a resolution authorizing the negotiation of a loan of ten thousand dollars to complete construction of the new church on West Market Street. Whether deacons were conscious of any irony in such close juxtaposition of resolutions of thanksgiving by one congregation and of the need by the other to borrow money is unrecorded.

Opening exercises for the West Market Street church were held in the Sunday School Annex on December 2, 1906. Hymns appropriate to the occasion were sung: "Building, Daily Building"; "Praise the Lord, Ye Heavens, Adore Him"; and "Christ Is Our Captain." An orchestra played, a quartet sang, and the roll was called. Printer, publisher of the *Biblical Recorder*, and renowned Sunday School leader, Needham B. Broughton, addressed the members. A collection was taken for the orphanage. Looking back, the event seems more modest than the dedication of the West Washington Street church had been, but, with construction not quite complete and indebtedness a concern, a more celebratory event would await a future time.



First Baptist Church on West Market Street pictured in undated photograph, ca. 1906. The congregation met here from 1906 to 1952.

Later that week the Baptist State Convention opened its annual session in Greensboro, the third time the church had hosted the event. Josiah W. Bailey, editor of the *Biblical Recorder*, electrified the audience by speaking on “The Strategic Hour in North Carolina Baptist Progress,” in which he passionately urged that the thirty thousand dollars raised by Board of Missions the previous year be increased to forty thousand dollars. “Cries of ‘Make it fifty! Make it fifty!’ were heard from every part of the building. It was a remarkable hour in the Convention’s history,” wrote Livingston Johnson, and fit well with the missions activities already undertaken by the church.

No sooner had the congregation moved to West Market Street than deacons had to consider how the facility could be used other than for worship and Bible study. In January 1907, the Ladies’ Aid Society requested permission “to hold an entertainment” in the Sunday School auditorium that would consist of a series of stereopticon slides illustrating Jerusalem and Palestine, interspersed with the singing of hymns. Because the nature of the event was deemed inappropriate for charging admission, the women hoped to use the Baraca classroom as a place to serve refreshments, for which there would be a charge. After lengthy discus-

sion, the request was approved, but two days later deacons returned to the general issue and, in a six to three vote, made clear that as a rule they did not favor refreshments and paid entertainment being held in the church building.

A much thornier matter, however, was about to confront deacons. They met in May 1907 to discuss "the present structure of the church and its relation to the Pastor." The minutes of the meeting do not make clear exactly what that meant, but, given concerns over finances, it seems likely that in some way this issue was involved. Each deacon offered his opinion, after which Lee Battle (no relation) was appointed to present their views to the pastor. When Dr. Rowe took the chair on June 2, 1907, for a joint meeting of deacons and pastor, he called upon Dr. Battle to read a letter in which the latter did not sound happy:

The message from a private session of your body, orally delivered at your request by Bro Lee H. Battle, and vitally affecting my pastor relations to the Church, is of such serious import that I respectfully ask, as a matter of right emphasized by the experiences of the past, that it be reduced to writing, signed and delivered. I ask that this be done without delay that I may give your grave and astounding deliverance the prompt and formal attention it deserves.

After making a few remarks, Dr. Battle left, leaving the full board of nine deacons to debate what to do next. When their views were found to be too far apart for a joint letter, each agreed to write a separate one to submit at a meeting on July 3 in the law office of Deacon Franklin P. Hobgood Jr.

On the appointed day the letters were read and collected to be forwarded to the pastor. The records fail to convey clearly the division these actions must have represented, but on July 7, 1907, Henry W. Battle resigned, pointedly informing the church:

After four years of unprecedented achievement in the cause of our Lord and Master—tokens of His unmerited favor—my pastorate must now come to an end. I now lay down at your feet that which, in obedience to your call and with implicit confidence of sympathy and co-operation, I then took up. The record is with God and the public:  
I AM CONTENT TO LEAVE IT THERE.

A motion to accept the pastor's resignation was narrowly adopted (fifty-three affirmative to forty-seven negative). By September, Dr. Battle had assumed the pastorate of First Baptist Church in Kinston; but even before September the

congregation in Greensboro had elected a pulpit committee of twelve members. One indication of the depth of feeling occasioned by these events came in August when deacons met “for the purpose of hearing expressions of good will among the brethren. Each brother spoke to the question in point and the meeting adjourned with a general handshaking among the brethren present and the best of feeling seemed to prevail.”

One wonders how deep and how easily healed the division in the congregation was. It is interesting to note, however, that the church constitution was soon changed. Now, twelve male deacons were being elected to three-year terms instead of serving for life. A pastor, the church determined, would be elected “for such period of time as he may faithfully and satisfactorily perform his duties” (which had been the practice in recent years even before the congregation approved this motion). Despite Dr. Battle’s departure the church continued to grow. During May and June 1908, forty new names were added to the roll, and pledges to the association increased as well. The final report of the building committee, however, delivered to the church in October 1907, was sobering: \$50,476.93 had been spent on the property and facility. Later that month the venerable Dr. Thomas Hume, who had been serving as interim pastor, was elected moderator of a special meeting at which Lee H. Battle, chair of the pulpit committee, recommended that Dr. Jacob Lee White, at the time pastor in Beaumont, Texas, be called with a salary of \$3,000 and use of the parsonage. (A new parsonage, also on West Washington Street, was purchased after the smaller one next to it was sold, leaving a balance due of \$2,000, one more debt for the church to absorb.) By a standing vote the congregation unanimously issued the call.

Difficult work lay ahead. Tightening of the credit market with the autumn onset of the Panic of 1907 could not have helped. No sooner had Dr. White arrived than, on Tuesday, January 7, 1908, he had to discuss the budget with deacons, who agreed that pledge cards should be prepared immediately. After newly elected deacons were ordained the next evening, the diaconate would meet for the purpose of dividing the church membership in order to personally canvass for pledges. Later in the month, White gathered with deacons in his office to consider how to meet “our financial obligations for the ensuing year.” On a Sunday afternoon in early February, he and the deacons conferred with “the entire male membership” of the church in an effort to put the church on a more secure foundation; as a result of the discussion, pledges were increased considerably. A year later, as giving continued to fall short of expenses, deacons decided to appoint a church member to collect unpaid pledges, and, when longtime member Charlie W. Jennings was elected to the post, it was with the understanding that



Dr. J. L. White poses with an unidentified Sunday School class at the West Market Street church, undated photograph, ca. 1910. Dr. White is standing center back row wearing a light suit and dark bowtie.

he would be paid a 10 percent commission for his services. Deacons, trustee, and members of the finance committee would help “to collect amounts due from delinquents and secure pledges from new members.” Finally, when it became apparent that even these efforts were insufficient, deacons in July 1909 put forward a plan in which an apportionment committee consisting of five members would be established. The committee would ascertain the church’s necessary expenses before the beginning of the fiscal year and would then prescribe for each member of the congregation the portion of that amount they would be expected to pay. After being notified of their assessment, members would be given the opportunity to meet with the committee if they found the apportionment unsatisfactory!

Perhaps one piece of evidence that the church was in dire financial straits was the resolution approved in July 1908 to audit the account of the building committee’s treasurer and to have a full account of receipts and disbursements prepared (everything was found to be in good order). The extent of the difficulty was illustrated by the extended negotiation with the Southern Baptist Convention’s Home Mission Board. The facts were outlined for the board in July 1909:



the cost of erecting the building and purchasing a parsonage was somewhat offset by the sale of the old church and contributions totaling \$11,604.93. The church was now left with a debt of \$32,000, of which \$10,000 was carried in a note from Penn Mutual Life Insurance Company that matured on November 1, 1909. (The other loans were secured locally.) The board had earlier declined to offer a gift of \$5,000 as the church had requested, and the church declined the board's offer of a loan in the same amount. But a compromise was now struck: if the church could renew the loan with Penn Mutual at the same interest rate, the board would agree to pay the interest for five years on the condition that during that period the church repay at least \$1,000 of the loan. Only a couple of days later the congregation expressed its "heartfelt appreciation" for this "timely assistance."

Although it would seem likely that these years of financial struggle would paralyze all other activity in the church, such was not the case. True, the surprisingly contentious issue of whether the church should continue to host "entertainments such as lawn parties, ice cream suppers, and paid entertainments for the purpose of raising money for the Church or any part thereof" could not be resolved by deacons owing to the "great diversity of opinion" on the issue. But a revival was held at the church in April 1907, not long before Dr. Battle's resignation, that brought to town the General Evangelist for the Home Mission Board (and future Southern Baptist Convention president) William Wister Hamilton, with W. D. Wakefield leading the singing and special services for children. The brochure describing their arrival brooked no excuses for not attending, whether one claimed to be a stranger, not a Christian, not a Baptist, someone who felt unconnected with the church, or a member who did not often attend. "Now for very shame, throw away all excuses and 'Come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.'"

Another revival was remembered years afterward by Mrs. Nell Hopkins. The daughter of Archie and Bessie Vernon ("Uncle Bob" was the stalwart R. L. Vernon), Nellie was baptized in 1908 by Dr. White following a tent revival conducted by visiting evangelist W. H. Wharton of Baltimore. Nellie, who was about twelve at the time, was "thrilled to death" by Wharton, whom she thought to be the "most wonderful looking old man," especially as he was dressed in his Confederate uniform. Coming down to the altar during the invitation because Wharton "appealed to me so," Hopkins laughingly recounted in a 1976 interview that at her baptism a woman fainted in the pool. Fortunately the fainting occurred after Nellie was baptized, because it so scared her that she did not think she could have gone into the water had the swooning woman preceded her!

The church continued to grow, although in October 1908, Superintendent Lee H. Battle thought that the Sunday School could do better. Approximately five hundred names were on the Sunday School rolls: seventy-six in the home department, thirty-five in the cradle roll department, and four hundred in the main school, with average attendance of about three hundred. The collection for the previous year was nearly \$500, with a quarter of that amount going to the orphanage. In April 1909, the addresses of new members were listed in the minute book, with street names like Pearson and Asheboro, South Eugene and North Cedar, Blandwood, West Lee, and Mendenhall, South Forbis, East Washington, Fifth, South Elm, and Tate, and avenues like Guilford, Lyndon, and Summit commonly appearing.

The intersection of Third and Virginia Streets was also significant, as letters of dismissal were granted on June 23, 1909, to eleven church members who would constitute a new church meeting in the dining hall of the Finishing Mills located on Third and Virginia. William H. Eller, then pastor at White Oak Baptist Church (its name taken from the largest of the Cone plants; the church would later become Sixteenth Street Baptist Church), led the presbytery. In 1912, the new church, with assistance from First Baptist, bought property from Ceasar Cone at a cost of \$150 and assumed a name that described its location: Magnolia Street Baptist Church.

Jacob L. White believed that First Baptist's "abundant sacrifice and loyalty" had, after two years of labor, lifted the church's "heaviest burdens." Now, on May 15, 1910, he tendered his resignation, citing as his only motivation the leading of the Holy Spirit to a new place of service. As it had so often in the past, the congregation adopted resolutions of appreciation for the departing pastor's service, this time noting "that we greatly regret the severance of the tender relation of Pastor and people which has existed during his pastorate of this Church, but bow to the call of the Spirit which removes him to a larger field." By the first of June, White had left for Memphis, Tennessee, to assume the pastorate of Central Baptist Church.

Back in Greensboro a pulpit committee was organized, composed of all fifteen deacons (whose number had been increased earlier in the year) and eight additional members of the church, with Frank Hobgood serving as chairman. Deacons urged the membership to stay faithful in their financial giving during the interim; a recent treasurer's report showed the church still much in need of additional funds. Meanwhile, a young pastoral candidate was soon identified and offered a salary of eighteen hundred dollars and the parsonage; but, at first, he hesitated to accept the position owing to his uncertain health. When after reconsideration he did, few could have predicted how great and long-lasting his influence would be.

## 6

# In the Presence of All His People

*I will pay my vows unto the Lord in the presence of all His people.*

—J. Clyde Turner, 1912

The typewritten letter is preserved in the papers of the legendary Dr. Archibald T. Robertson, professor of Interpretation of New Testament Greek at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, from 1895, until his death in 1934. Addressed to Robertson, the letter was typed on the stationary of the Oxford Orphan Asylum dated January 10, 1902:

My dear Sir,

I am contemplating entering some Theological Seminary next Fall and would thank you if you would send me a Catalog of the Southern Baptist and give me any additional information as to cost, etc. I have not taken this step hastily but only after several years of study. I have tried to drown myself in other work and tried school teaching immediately after leaving College. Finding I could not become satisfied with that I sought to compromise the matter by accepting work here at the Oxford Orphanage Asylum. And, still, I find the heart thirst is not satisfied. I shall try to press it down no longer. I will give up my work here the first of next September. Any advice you may give me will be highly appreciated.

The letter is signed, “J. Clyde Turner.” By the time he left Oxford for the seminary, Turner was twenty-three years old.

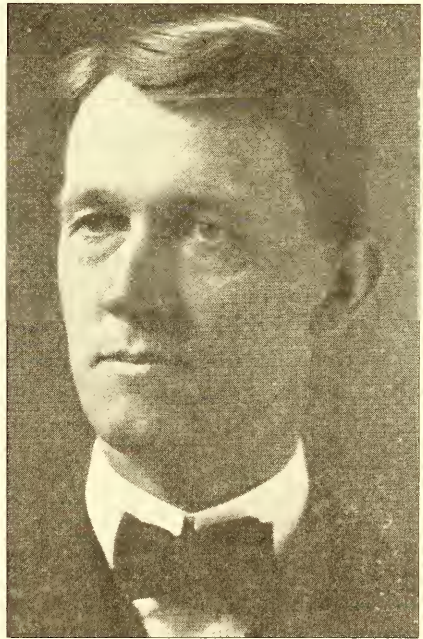
As tempting as it is to describe the thirty-eight years of J. Clyde Turner’s pastorate of First Baptist Church as if he were the sole mover of events, Turner did not view his pastorate in such a manner. In writing again to Dr. Robertson, this

time in 1931, when his old professor was nearing the end of a distinguished career, Turner confessed that “from my earliest childhood you have been an inspiration to me. Blessing on you in these days when you are giving to us and the world the rich fruit of your many years of hard work.” Turner may well have been surprised and even amused to find others saying to him the same kind of things. That he recognized the dangers of such mythology is evidenced by the fact that when he retired from First Baptist in 1948, he and his wife Bertha Hicks Turner (daughter of the Oxford Orphan Asylum superintendent, W. J. Hicks) moved to Raleigh, where he declined even to subscribe to a Greensboro newspaper out of concern that he might be drawn back into the ministry he had handed over to others. The great challenge for understanding the thirty-eight years Turner served First Baptist is not to debunk the man but to keep him in a context in which he led, blessed, encouraged, and worked alongside others in a congregation with its own ever-lengthening record of ministry that reached from home to the uttermost parts of the world.

Two complications make this task more difficult. The first is the surprising lack of church records, particularly minutes of conferences, for most of the period from 1912 to 1950, nearly the exact years of Turner’s pastorate in Greensboro. Deacon James D. Wilkins, one of the most active church leaders during this period, expressed his consternation over this gap in a letter he wrote on March 1, 1956, to Dr. Gaines S. Dobbins, for many years dean of the School of Christian Education at Southern Seminary, saying that he was “disturbed and surprised” by the absence of over twenty years of church records that Turner now needed for the history he was then writing. In *A Century of Service*, Turner acknowledged the limitation imposed by the records’ absence, stating, “The books which contain the minutes of the church from 1912 to 1950 were lost or destroyed, so we have no accurate record of the activities of the church during those years. In trying to record these activities, we are dependent in part on memory. That means that some things of importance may be omitted, and some things only partially recorded.” What was true at the time Turner was writing his history is even more so today, when memories of the period have faded and even disappeared. Fortunately, the loss is partially offset by the more regular keeping of minutes by the diaconate, all of which appear to have survived—the problem remaining of always knowing how recommendations of deacons were received by the congregation and the extent to which the congregation acted on its own concerns. (That said, as the diaconate was often referred to as a “board,” implying administrative responsibilities, with meetings taking place once a month in contrast to the quarterly congregational meetings, one senses that issues were more thoroughly considered here than at the congregational level.)

Adding to the absence of records is a second complication: the lost church minutes likely were fewer in number compared to the surviving three volumes that detailed activities from 1873 to 1911. The reason for presuming their paucity is simple; Turner shied away from conducting monthly church conferences, perhaps because they had often been a source of contention for the congregation in the past. As early as 1914, he proposed to deacons that the church conference be held only quarterly, at which time every branch of the church organization could present reports and requests. The minute books that have survived from the period, one from 1927 to 1938 and another from 1938 to 1940, show that the congregation continued to follow this practice.

Although Turner was a young man when he came to Greensboro, his preparation was sound. A graduate of Wake Forest College (1899) and The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (1905), Turner was ordained by Livingston Johnson at Statesville, near Turner's home place in Iredell County, North Carolina, in 1903. From an early pastorate at the Tatnall Square Baptist Church on the campus of Mercer University in Macon, Georgia, Turner returned in 1908 to Oxford Orphan Asylum, where he had earlier worked to marry Bertha May Hicks, who had been baptized by J. L. White (the pastor who immediately preceded Turner in Greensboro). Turner's association with Baptist orphanages was strong, particularly as he and his wife remained childless and his unmarried older sister Eulalia served as "lady manager" at Mills Home in Thomasville, North Carolina, from 1899 to 1938. Turner's promising young life, however, was nearly derailed by an apparent onset of tuberculosis. From Macon he moved to Cragmont Sanatorium near Black Mountain, North Carolina, where he was speedily recuperating when he received the call from First Baptist Church in Greensboro. After an interim period lasting from the first Sunday in December of 1910, until the middle of March the following year, in which Turner traveled from Black Mountain to First Baptist each weekend, the Turners moved to Greensboro.



Clyde Turner poses for undated photograph, ca. 1910. From the 1935 bulletin commemorating his 25th anniversary as pastor.

Rev. Turner (the degree of doctor of divinity would be conferred by Wake Forest University in 1920) preached his first sermon at the church to "an unusually large congregation" on Sunday, December 4, 1910, a cloudy and snowy morning. Drawing as his text Ephesians 1:16: "Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers," Turner "urged the importance of prayer, but said that the tendency was too much toward praying for ourselves and not enough for others; that those who get the highest blessing are those unselfish people who reach out in prayer and service to help their fellowmen." To the newspaper that reported on what he said, Turner's sermon was "beautiful" but, more importantly, "a helpful and practical one." Those who had not previously heard Turner preach would come to realize that few of his sermons were without an application to spiritual life and an expectation to use it.

When Clyde and Bertha Turner settled in Greensboro in March 1911, they lived in a new parsonage—the Sherwood House at 430 West Gaston Street—

Greensboro N.C.  
 Jan 9th 1911  
 Regular Conference of the  
 Deacons met at about  
 10 A.M. Pastor - Rev. J. Edgar  
 Brown - presiding.  
 In the presence of: Spencer, Brooker,  
 Jennings, Oliver, Cook, Thomas,  
 Gardner, Hayward, Hanison.  
 In the absence of the Clerk  
 an age of sickness. Bro  
 Turner was requested  
 to act as Clerk pro tem.  
 The Cons. who were asked  
 to look into certain reports  
 concerning Miss Maria Cox.  
 reported that they could not  
 find any truth in the  
 reports - on motion report  
 accepted & Cons. discharged.  
 Bro Jennings - Admin.  
 Cons. in coal supply  
 reports and <sup>the</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~found~~  
 to be true. Cons. on light

reported and a large  
 Cons. appointed, consisting  
 of C. H. Jennings, Bro. J. E.  
 Hanison, Bro. Thomas - & the  
 Vestibular of the Church - Bro  
 Rowe.  
 Cons. to inquire - measure to  
 employ Miss Carmacke - re-  
 elect Bro Thomas as being absent  
 in medical report from his  
 study.  
 On motion Bro Rowe the  
 Clerk was instructed to refer  
 to the Cons. at its next regular  
 conference to apply the above  
 conditions and at 9 o'clock  
 to the meeting.  
 On motion Bro Rowe -  
 Bro Rowe was re-elected  
 Clerk of the Board of Deacons  
 for the ensuing year &  
 Bro. White - Wagon - was  
 of the fall school fund.

Turner makes his first appearance in the Deacon Minute Book from January 9, 1911, together with a finding about a church member who had been falsely accused (of what is unstated) and reports on the coal supply, lights, how to pay a Miss Carmacke, and the re-election of Brother Rowe as clerk of the board of deacons.

because the church had sold the property on West Washington Street, with the \$6,000 resulting from the sale going toward indebtedness on the church. (The Ladies' Aid Society assumed responsibility for the mortgage on the new parsonage for several years until relieved of the burden by the church.)

Rev. Turner found a church struggling with old frustrations. "If we can raise \$100 per week, we will be in good shape," the church treasurer informed him, referring to operating expenses. Deacons also expressed the concern at their meeting in May 1911 that some of the members were "not walking in strict accordance with our covenant and church manual," and they asked Turner to read the covenant and articles of discipline from the pulpit on the following Sunday. At the church conference later in the month, Turner gave "a short but helpful talk on the importance of not losing touch with Christ," after urging passage of a resolution that would organize a committee to contact 125 nonresident members and encourage them to move their membership to local Baptist churches. Although their removal reduced the number of members, church growth offset the loss, with a membership of 581 in 1911 (before the roll was pared) and 580 in 1912 after letters of dismissal had been given.

There should have been no question that this young man's pastorate had begun energetically. Turner's salary was soon raised to two thousand dollars (the amount paid to Battle but not as much as that given to White). In December 1915, it was raised another five hundred dollars as the church's building debt was about to be liquidated. Not surprisingly, deacons also appointed a committee to express "our love and appreciation for our Pastor and his faithful services."

Once again the church demonstrated its willingness to undertake and sustain missions activity even when supporting the operating budget appeared to strain its resources. In 1912, the centennial year of Adoniram and Ann Judson's departure as missionaries to Burma, the church was visited by Robert T. Bryan, a North Carolina missionary serving in China under the direction of the Foreign Mission Board. Bryan asked the congregation to contribute to the convention's Judson Centennial Fund and its goal of one million dollars for social work in China. The church's contributions allowed for the construction of a church building in Chingkiang (Zhenjiang), one of five stations in the Central China Mission.

A new mission was also begun in Greensboro, this time in cooperation with the Forest Avenue church. With the initiative once again of W. H. Eller, a lot was secured at the intersection of Florida Street and Freeman Mill Road in the Glenwood neighborhood, where a frame building was erected as a meeting place. With money from First Baptist and the property deeded by the Forest

Avenue congregation, the newly organized church soon sold its small building and lot and moved further west, establishing itself as Florida Street Baptist Church.

Much of Turner's preaching has attracted attention from Baptist scholars because of its Christology or doctrinal and denominational emphasis, but the congregation likely heard with greatest interest those sermons that were more pastoral in their nature. Two sermons Turner preached in 1912 illustrate twin hallmarks: that lives lived according to Christian principles were appreciably different from those that were not and that the world outside the church needed the witness of such lives. The Christianity he preached, if it was to be authentic, was visible and tangible in everyday living.

In the Sunday morning service of March 3, 1912, Turner preached a sermon titled, "Greensboro Not Only Bigger but Better," with a text from Matthew 16:26: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" In it Turner observed how "material growth and moral degeneracy have usually gone hand in hand," and, so, while he would heartily join "every public-spirited citizen" in the effort to bring new railroads, buildings, factories, and the people who would populate them, to a bigger Greensboro, he was more interested in building a better Greensboro. The city needed to be cleaner and more beautiful, but the moral environment of the home was even more important: "I say it only after mature deliberation; I do not believe there is anything which is proving a greater curse to the homes of Greensboro today than the card-table." Improved correction and instruction of children were also required. Furthermore, churches needed to be better, with Christians who were better in their heart, lives, and in their service to the Lord. Turner continued with a call for better public environments, with more careful observance of Sundays and more wholesome institutions. "There are places on the main street of our city today that rival the saloon of by-gone days in the influence which they exert on the young manhood of our town." Turner cited the movie theatre saying: "We have only to go through the public streets of our city and look at the pictures that are posted there to realize that the theatre today is on the downward tendency and lives by catering to the lower natures of our manhood and womanhood." None of these improvements would be possible without "a better public sentiment." With a public sentiment molded by the city's Christians, "Greensboro can become morally just what the men and women of Greensboro's churches want it to become. The things that stand for moral corruption and degeneracy can exist no longer than the Christian people allow them to exist."

The Thanksgiving sermon of Wednesday, November 27, 1912, neatly juxtaposes Turner's old-style piety next to the Christian boosterism of his earlier





Rev. Turner and an unidentified Sunday school class are pictured at the West Market Street church ca. 1910. Turner is standing to the right rear.

Greensboro sermon. “If we have experienced any great blessing God does not want us to hide it in our hearts but wants us to tell others how great things the Lord hath done for us,” Turner declared. “I rather like the old time experience meeting in which Christian people tell each other what the Lord has done for them. I will pay my vows unto the Lord in the presence of all His people.”

Turner also paid his vows through his willingness to speak out in the cause of social justice. When the North Carolina Education Association took up the cause of equal pay for women teachers in 1918, Turner was willing to be quoted in the association’s legislative committee brochure: “The effort of the women teachers of North Carolina to secure ‘equal pay for equal work’ is one to enlist the support of every lover of justice. If, everything taken into consideration, the services rendered by women are equal to the services rendered by men, there is no just reason why the pay should not be equal.” In later years Turner pursued similar efforts, as he did in 1925 when he served with Wake Forest President William L. Poteat on a Southern Baptist Convention “peace commission” that advocated the abolition of war as an instrument of national policy. Turner was also a member of the United Dry Forces (headed by Poteat), a leading interest group that in 1934 defeated in North Carolina the attempt to repeal Prohibition’s Eighteenth Amendment.

In order for the church to pay its vows unto the Lord, it would first need to pay its creditors. By 1915, a manageable debt of fifty-five hundred dollars re-

First Baptist Church Bulletin

CHURCH OFFICERS

Rev. J. Clyde Turner, Pastor
In W. W. Rowe, Clerk
M. W. Thompson, Treas. Bdng. Pres.
Vander Liles, Mission Treasurer
W. H. Stone, Current Expense Treas.
W. L. Carter, Asst. Current Exp. Treas.

DEACONS

A. Wayland Cooke, Chairman
Carter, W. L.
Conley, W. M.
Cuthfield, George P.
Gardner, Howard
Harrison, J. B.
Hogwood, F. P. Jr.
Jennings, C. W.
Liles, Vander
Lincoln, C. E.
Lipcomb, Dr. C. F.
Moore, O. W.
Muesley, Dr. C. W.
Nicks, J. C.
Patterson, R. L.
Rowe, Dr. W. W.
Stone, Whit R.
Stroud, J. B.
Thomas, John
Thompson, M. W.

B. Y. P. U.

Meets every Monday evening at 8 p. m.
All the young people of the church and congregation are cordially invited to attend these meetings.

MEET ME AT THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH.

Dr. E. Y. F. U.

Meets every Sunday afternoon, 3 o'clock

The following are the subjects of a series of sermons to be preached by the pastor on Sunday evenings entitled "Summer Evenings with Joseph."

- July 9—"The Trosny Prisoner."
July 16—"The Exalted Bulw."
July 23—"The Purgiving Brother."
July 30—"The Loving Son."
Aug. 6—"The Unburied Bones."

Summer vacation time is approaching. Be sure to take your religion with you, and that you bring not reproach upon the name of Christ. Be an all the year round disciple.

INFORMATION FOR THE PASTOR

Please fill out blanks, mark X in the appropriate space, tear out and deposit on the collection plate.

Change of address
Sickness
Special call requested
Newcomer
May join church or S. S.
Name
Address

First Baptist Church Bulletin

Greensboro, North Carolina

VOL. I. SUNDAY, JULY 9, 1916 No. 5

THIS little Bulletin announces the meetings of the First Baptist Church, its Sunday School and its several Societies and Committees for the week beginning today. The simple announcements, however, do not convey, as we wish they might, the abounding welcome to all persons finding their way to this place of worship today, or to any of the meetings of the week. To the friends who know us we desire to renew our welcome; to the strangers we extend it most sincerely, and to those seeking a church home we want to assure you that here you will find Christian fellowship and love and also a place of service. The Pastor will always be glad to see you.

Pictured above and below is one of the first issues of the church bulletin—July 9, 1916.

First Baptist Church Bulletin

First Baptist Church Bulletin

Published Weekly by the Publicity Committee



First Baptist Church

REV. J. CLYDE TURNER, Pastor

SOME CHURCH STATISTICS

During the past year there have been eighty-two additions to the membership, sixteen by baptism and sixty-one by letter; and a loss of forty-four, thirty-seven by letter, two by excommunication, and five by death. This leaves a net gain of thirty-eight. The present membership is 676, of which 266 are males and 410 females. Offerings for all objects for the year amounted to \$14,927.65. Of this amount

MORNING SERVICE

11:00 O'clock

- Exordium
Invitation
 Anthem to the Choir
 Hymn
 Scripture
 Choir
 Prayer
 Offering
 Hymn
 Sermon—"Partners with God."
 Hymn
 Benediction

EVENING SERVICE

8:00 O'clock

- Hymn
 Scripture
 Choir
 Prayer
 Offering
 Hymn
 Sermon—"Joseph, the Trusty Utensiler."
 Hymn
 Benediction

PRAYER MEETING

Every Wednesday evening at seven o'clock.

First Baptist Church Bulletin

Continued from page 1

\$9,409.20 went to meet local expenses, payment of debt, etc. \$1,138.18 was contributed to the objects of the convention. This was divided as follows:

Table with 2 columns: Item and Amount. Includes Foreign Missions (\$197.38), Home Missions (\$76.10), State Missions (\$67.21), Orphanage (\$60.56), Christian Education (\$63.41), Ministerial Relief (\$33.36), Jackson Centennial Fund (\$48.34), Other Objects (\$14.32).

This shows an increase over the offering of last year of over \$70 on Foreign Missions, \$120 on Home Missions, but a decrease of \$60 on State Missions. The increase was made through special offerings. It is a fact worthy of serious consideration that the regular weekly offerings for both Current Expenses and Benevolences show a decrease from the offerings of the year before.

Table with 2 columns: Society Name and Amount. Includes Woman's Missionary Society (\$460.63), Y. W. A. (\$17.85), Girls' Auxiliary (\$28.81), Sunkists (\$37.5), Royal Ambassadors (\$2.35), Sunday School (\$411.27).

The New Year is before us. Let us begin now and write the record LARGO.

AMONG OUR MEMBERS

We note that Mr. George Hart has arrived in Greensboro with his wife and we congratulate him and also extend Mrs. Hart a hearty welcome in our midst. Mr. J. T. Morgan also took unto himself a bride some time ago, and we are glad to have Mrs. Morgan with us, too.

WOMAN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY

The Woman's Missionary Society will hold its regular monthly meeting Monday afternoon at 4 o'clock in the Ladies' Parlor. Members are asked to come a few minutes earlier and get a refreshing glass of lemonade before the meeting opens.

PHILATHEA CLASS

The Philathea Class will hold its regular monthly social meeting in the classroom at the church, Tuesday evening at 8:30 o'clock.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Every Sunday morning at 9:30

- Vander Liles, Superintendent
J. H. Wilkins, Asst. Supt.
T. B. Haskins, Asst. Supt.
C. L. Howard, Secretary
R. J. Carr, Assistant Secretary
George O. Fowler, Treasurer
Fred Patterson, Librarian
Raymond Lanier, Asst. Librarian

Don't ask who the strangers are, speak to them and make them well come to the church and all its services.

If you would live the Christ life, study Christ's life. The more a Christian reads God's word, the more like Christ it will become.—Selected.

mained on the building and would be paid in one last effort that year. But the church was already beginning to require repairs—the baptistery leaked, wooden girders in the roof required attention, and interior walls needed repainting. Finally, Easter Sunday, April 8, 1917, was chosen as the day to dedicate the ten-year-old building.

On that day the auditorium filled as the members of First Baptist Church were joined by the Asheboro Street congregation. Turner spoke briefly on the church's history and observed that within the last twenty-two years, after a long period of being the only Baptist congregation in town, the church had sent out across Greensboro no less than nine "daughters and granddaughters." Livingston Johnson once again returned to the church to preach the dedicatory sermon. Afterwards, W. W. Rowe, the eldest deacon, rose from his place on the front pew and went to the anteroom behind the pulpit to retrieve a metal container full of the church's notes of credit. After setting the container down in front of the pulpit, Deacon John Thomas, who had served nearly as long as Rowe, came forward and touched a match to them. Now free of debt, the church was properly dedicated.

At the service the choir sang the anthem "Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain of Triumphant Gladness!" Singing it must have been difficult, given the events of the previous week. On the evening of April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson addressed a special session of Congress where he asserted that "the world must be made safe for democracy." Four days later, on Good Friday, Congress authorized the declaration of war that Wilson had called for, as the United States entered what was being called the Great War.

Johnson's sermon provided an interesting commentary on the mission of the church in a time of war. The sermon, "God's Call to the Soul," drew its text from Psalm 42:7: "Deep calleth unto deep," which Johnson said had been illustrated for him by witnessing how along the Outer Banks the thunderous waves of the ocean, like God's call, were met by the weaker lapping of the sounds, like our human response. Without dismissing the church's "ministry to the body," that is, its mission of service to society, Johnson argued that the highest mission of the church lay elsewhere:

The supreme need of our churches today is moral earnestness. This nation is at war today because we lacked it. Do not misunderstand me; I have no word of blame for our leaders. There was nothing else for them to do. But I declare that if God's people all over Europe had had the moral earnestness that they should have had, there wouldn't have been a gun fired.

Johnson, who had returned to the pastorate in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, explained what he meant:

A young man from another church came to me. 'Have you a flag behind your pulpit?' he asked me. 'No,' said I. 'Why should I have?' 'Why,' he said, 'at this time every church ought to show its patriotism.' I told him that when it came to sending young men to die for their country, I would set up my church against any other in Rocky Mount; but its business is with the souls of men, and in that business it recognized only one symbol, and would display only one banner which was the cross of Jesus Christ.

Given the events of the past week, Johnson's testimony must have been powerful.

"When the War Will End" was the title of a sermon Turner preached in the spring of 1918 when, after a year of preparation, American troops began to arrive on French battlefields in significant numbers. With his text taken from Psalm 46:9: "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth," Turner answered the question of when the war would end by asserting that God "will let it continue until the nations of this earth know that he is God and are ready to exalt him in their lives." Then, as was his wont, Turner concluded, "This can come only as the individual gives up his sins and dedicates his life to God." Meanwhile, a cadre of church members would work to ensure that the young men who had left the congregation to enter the military were not forgotten.

The week after Turner's war sermon, James D. Wilkins, deacon, Sunday School superintendent, and businessman whose decorative iron and steelworks would become a city fixture, wrote a memorandum to Turner and church workers Wayland Cooke, Mrs. James R. McClamroch, Miss Theodocia Blackman, and Miss Flieda Johnson, in which he asked for information that would help him compile a newsletter to be sent to the church's servicemen via their parents. His requests were specific: from the pastor he wanted "a personal word of stimulation and encouragement"; Mrs. McClamroch was to compile an accurate mailing list; Cooke would report news from the Newton-Baraca Sunday School Class, where most of the young men were members; while Blackman and Johnson would compile personal items of interest and "personals concerning the boys themselves," such as furloughs, promotions, or extracts from letter to home. Wilkins's typewritten and mimeographed, four-page newsletter can lay claim to being the church's first (a regularly issued newsletter for the general membership being years away). *The Connecting Link* debuted on June 26, 1918, and

apparently ran no more than a few issues. But the results provide a fascinating snapshot both of the work of the church and how the congregation sought to keep its ties with youth gone to war.

In the first newsletter the Baptist Young People's Union reported on its activities. Mr. Turner, for example, had preached the baccalaureate sermon to the graduating class of Greensboro High School on May 26, 1918. The youth also enjoyed "a delightful outing" at the Guilford Battle Ground (Wilkins omitted noting that one of the Durham family boys ate six ice cream cones at the event and that ice water had been substituted for punch in order to "Hooverize," presumably saving sugar in accordance with the voluntary rationing outlined by U. S. Food Administrator Herbert Hoover).

The BYPU also relayed news about revival services conducted by evangelist Josiah H. Dew and Rev. Turner's endorsement of the church's support of the YMCA War Fund, Liberty Loans, the Red Cross campaign, and the sale of War Savings Stamps.

Regarding those in military service, the news was upbeat. The largest draft contingent yet to leave Greensboro headed off to Camp Jackson, South Carolina, and included three more young men from the congregation. Adalai Hudson was the latest and fifty-second member of the congregation to depart from the city. Word had arrived that Charles Thacker was beginning to recover from being gassed while Sergeants Lewis Pierson and Clyde Crutchfield had recently arrived "somewhere in France" with their trench mortar batteries.

In his letter to the servicemen, Rev. Turner told of the service flag hanging in the auditorium as "a constant reminder to us of the splendid men who have gone out from the homes of our congregation to serve their country, aye to serve the world." One of the stars was golden, indicating a life lost. Joseph Walter Rowe, son of Walter and Mary Rowe, had died at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard. More stars, both blue and gold, would be added in the coming months.

J. D. Wilkins received a raft of notes thanking him for compiling the newsletter. Roy J. Spearman's parents, for example, wrote from Lynchburg, Virginia, on August 19, 1918, of their appreciation for the interest shown in their son, adding in simple pride that "of course, we think he is one of the finest boys living and are very proud of him." Spearman was working long days at his training camp



A. Wayland Cooke is pictured in an undated photograph, ca. 1920.

in Illinois and, according to his mother, had not “given me any rank as yet, but wanted a good one before he put any before his name, and we are trusting that he gets it.”

Doubtless, the servicemen were too busy to write many letters, but at least one survives from Sergeant William T. White, who, in the summer of 1918, reported from South Carolina that he was one of “what we call the sick, lame and lazy bunch, and there sure is a bunch of us here.” White was acting as supply sergeant on the day when 931 recruits joined his company. “I had no one to help me, and I had to listen to the wants of the 900 men every day all day long, and do my work too. They took me to be a bureau of information. They also seemed to think that all I had to do was to reach out in the air and get any thing they wanted from a cake of wash soap to a discharge.”

At least one further edition of the newsletter was written; more do not survive. In *The Connecting Link* of August 13, 1918, Sunday School teacher Wayland Cooke brought news from the Newton-Baraca Class, from whose ranks twenty-one servicemen had come. “Greensboro is going ahead,” Cooke informed the boys. “The old Fisher Building has been torn down and a sky-scraper will be erected by the American Exchange National Bank. The new court house is beginning to show up well.” Cooke also related a humorous encounter that occurred when a train full of soldiers passed through the city. “The boys are all anxious to go to the front. When they come through here they are in fine spirits. Some of the ladies were at the train sometime ago crying as they saw so many going through and one of the soldiers shouted out the window, ‘Cut out that sob business,’ whereupon the whole crowd roared.”

Much of the news, however, was more sober. Another gold star was added to the service flag, and the number serving in the military had now reached fifty-eight. As the war grew more deadly for Americans, Governor Thomas W. Bickett issued a proclamation calling for an hour of prayer, and the sound of church bells could be heard across the city each evening at seven. In another of his letters, the pastor noted encouraging progress along the front, assuring servicemen of the feeling among the people at home that “if you men are willing to go and fight, they are willing to keep the home fires burning. Not only willing, but glad, though it take the whole resources of our fair land.” Turner recognized that one of those resources conceivably could have been him; the third draft of September 12, 1918, included all men between the ages of sixteen and forty-five years old. “The writer comes within the age limit this time. Some of these days he may meet you in uniform.”

That day never came. Nevertheless, before the war ended, the church was forced to close its doors in early October 1918, not because of a pastor’s absence

but as a result of the influenza pandemic of 1918 that was sweeping the nation. One of the most frightening aspects of this deadly disease was its propensity to strike hardest healthy young adults. Among the 156 lives the pandemic claimed in Guilford County that autumn was S. Cecil Hilliard, the young pastor of Forest Avenue Baptist Church, who died on October 27. For the December 1, 1918, worship service, Turner estimated that only one-half to two-thirds of the congregation at West Market Street was present. The pandemic also postponed the church's hosting of the annual session of the Baptist State Convention from December 1918 to January 1919. (When the session convened on January 14, 1919, only about 350 delegates, half the number that otherwise would have been expected, attended.)

In the midst of war, local Baptists gathered in Franklinville in July 1918 for the annual meeting of the Piedmont Baptist Association. The church's report was described in an account published in the *Greensboro Daily News* as "a highly credible one." A year and a half earlier, the building was declared free of debt and had been dedicated. For the fiscal year ending in June 1918, 124 members were added for a total of 770. Financial contributions were \$10,400.80, with about half that amount spent for missions. The Ladies' Aid and Missionary Societies raised \$1,261.97. An interesting name appeared in the report as W. W. Rowe had once again assumed the position of church clerk. Unfortunately his minutes (except for the deacon minutes he also recorded) are among the records that at some point were lost.

The offering collected at the church's Thanksgiving Day service in 1918 was designated for the Thomasville Orphanage. By then an armistice had been signed in France, and the most destructive war humanity had ever known ended. As 1919 began, the church renewed its activities at home with another special offering, this one to pay for repairs to the basement, the purchase of new equipment for the Sunday School, and the mortgage on the parsonage. A committee was also appointed in January to consider the feasibility of hiring a church secretary. The state convention's Million Dollar Educational Fund had apportioned a goal of sixteen thousand dollars for the church and efforts to secure this amount were well underway before the end of the year. The pastor reported in March that the ministers' association of Greensboro was considering bringing the flamboyant evangelist Billy Sunday to lead a revival in the city, but a division of opinion had forestalled further action. An advertising bill for "Go to Church" Sunday was paid to the newspaper in May. Returning soldiers and sailors who were members of the church were honored at a banquet on Friday, July 11, and a special thanksgiving service the following Sunday, and their names were recorded upon the minutes of the church.

The rhythms of church life seemed to return to something that resembled normalcy, even if no one could be sure any longer what that meant.

Doubt that a new age was beginning was swept away in the summer of 1919 when the Southern Baptist Convention (which the previous year had reinstated women as messengers) made a daring and direct appeal to Baptists to undertake a huge campaign to raise money for missions. The Seventy-Five Million Dollar Campaign was unprecedented, resembling as it did the fund raising drives of the war more than earlier denominational efforts. Allocations of money to the different mission boards would be set by the convention with giving to be pledged for a five-year period, capitalizing on the prosperity enjoyed in the South as a result of wartime demand for cotton. "We will sin against God and against humanity if we do not enter the open doors set before us," proclaimed the *Texas Baptist Standard* in an editorial from June 19, 1919. "The Seventy-Five Million Dollar Campaign is our response to the challenge of these world opportunities." With Wilsonian idealism Dr. Rufus W. Weaver (grandson of Amos Weaver who had preached to the tiny Greensboro congregation before the Civil War) of the Immanuel Baptist Church of Nashville, Tennessee, declared that "this campaign will prove the strength of our spiritual democracy. . . . God is calling Southern Baptists to the spiritual leadership of the world." By the end of the year, a whopping \$92.6 million had been pledged, although the collapse of cotton prices in the early 1920s brought economic hardship and prevented more than \$58.6 million from being collected when the campaign ended in 1925—still an amount greater than had ever before gone to convention causes. The North Carolina Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem was chartered in 1923 as part of this effort, and Dr. Turner noted with pride that the church paid to the campaign "every penny it pledged."

The church took part in other international outreach efforts in the years after the Great War. A canvass of the congregation was conducted on Sunday, February 20, 1921, in cooperation with churches across the nation to provide famine relief for the people of northern China. In April 1923, more pledges were made and, to the disappointment of the finance committee in June, poorly paid for refugee relief efforts were undertaken by the American Near East Relief Committee in the wake of Turkish massacres of Armenians and Greeks. More than money went out from the church; the pastor was granted leave to take part in the Baptist World Alliance Congress of 1923 in Stockholm, where the World Baptist Young People's Union was organized.

Evangelistic activity near home also intensified in the years following the Great War. The month of September 1921 was set aside for inducing at least one-sixth of the membership to tithe, while October would be dedicated to the



personal evangelism of the “Each One Win One” campaign. A “Father and Son Day” was planned for January 14, 1921, and the effort was continued with a supper in November 1922 as part of a weeklong observance planned by the YMCA.

With so many undertakings, facilities and personnel were being overworked. The 1920 associational letter was read to the congregation in July and showed an increase of 156 members. Surely the dinner hosted for new members at the end of the month dramatically visualized how the resources of the church needed to be increased to meet the needs of a growing membership. One response to these larger numbers was an increase in the church leadership team. The diaconate was increased in size to twenty in July 1918, with deacons elected rotationally to four-year terms. Lydia Yates Hilliard, widow of influenza victim S. C. Hilliard, was hired in May 1919 as office manager and assistant to the pastor. After her departure in 1921, Ora Earl Lee, recent graduate of Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, was called to the new position of educational director. Almost immediately Lee set out to reorganize the Sunday School and the BYPU. The next year, in June 1922, with the assistance of his wife Ethel, he opened the first daily Vacation Bible School among Baptist churches in the state.



The dates on the signboard suggest that this photo is of the second Vacation Bible School from 1923. Dr. Turner stands to the right and educational director O.E. Lee to the left. First Baptist was the first Baptist church in the state to sponsor a VBS.

(The school ran for four weeks, beginning on June 15, 1922.) Salaries also had to be increased dramatically because of the sharp inflation that followed the war. In less than a year, Hilliard's salary was raised from \$75 to \$100 a month; while Turner's yearly compensation went from \$2,500 to \$3,600 in the five years from 1915 to 1920. In the summer of 1921, a standing vote of the congregation raised it again, this time to \$5,000. Assistance to supplement the salary of the pastor of the Magnolia Street church also increased from \$40 to \$66.66 a month.

The congregation crowded the West Market Street facility. As early as January 3, 1921, deacons "discussed at some length" the idea of increasing space for the Sunday School, and Deacon Roger W. Harrison (who would serve as city mayor in the 1930s) reported on the availability of two properties north of the church where a new facility might be constructed. Although Harrison's idea did not go far, a committee was appointed to consider the question of how additional space could be added to the existing church, and in June 1922, deacons were reviewing blueprints that required the difficult work of excavating a large basement under the building and redoing the original foundation. The plan, as described in the *Greensboro Daily News*, was a temporary expedient that would add four assembly rooms and twenty-three classrooms and modestly increase the size of the auditorium to accommodate an additional four hundred members. (Turner was also clear in stating that this was not an ideal solution and that at the present rate of growth the landlocked church would eventually require a new building.) A flurry of activity followed with the result that pledges were subscribed and construction begun. On January 17, 1923, the rooms were opened for the congregation's inspection. The beginners, primary, and junior departments, and the Covington Bible Class found new quarters (although the Covington class soon needed to rent space at the YMCA). By October final costs were tallied, with a total of \$41,505.85 having been spent (not including the cost of a new organ), and \$9,390.96 paid on pledges. As might have been expected, a special emphasis was required in October and November for paying pledges to the building program and the ongoing Seventy-Five Million Dollar Campaign.

Such activity would have been much more difficult without a fair degree of spiritual discipline. At their meeting on May 2, 1923, deacons discussed pledging to the Seventy-Five Million Dollar Campaign and the American Near East Relief Fund and planning for the William McLendon revival services in June. They also voted to recommend that membership be withdrawn from twenty-eight individuals for "non-attendance, non-affiliation, and non-support." Turner was just as serious regarding the responsibilities of church membership. At the December 1922 deacons meeting, "after financial matters were disposed," the

pastor “called special attention to the lack of spirituality in the Church.” Too many church members exhibited an “apparent self satisfied air” and “great tendencies to follow the ways of the world and show no concern for the salvation of souls.” Evidence for these conclusions abounded: many members failed to attend evening services or “manifest any desire to advance Christ’s Kingdom,” and rarely did they “do any personal work for our Savior.” Turner concluded with a plea that deacons “begin at once to pray at least once each day for more spirituality in the church and more devotion and earnestness in the work of saving souls.” The following January, Turner cautioned deacons “not to forget to pray for deeper spirituality.”

The pastor did not fail to address his concerns to the congregation. In a sermon titled, “Some Marks of a Good Church Member,” preached on February 13, 1921 (and again in 1940), Turner reminded his audience that regeneration was “one of the fundamental doctrines among Baptists” but that too often “we have been too eager to get folks into the church.” Good churchmanship also required intelligence: an intelligent understanding of the fundamental doctrines of salvation, the particular doctrines of the member’s church, and the work of the denomination. The final quality was loyalty, to the ideals of the church, as exhibited by one’s life and character, to the doctrines of the church, as witnessed through faithful attendance at worship services, and to the work of the church, as evidenced through liberality and service. As the decade of the twenties began to roar, Turner would prove unwilling to allow the church to enjoy the material benefits that came with an increase in membership and wealth if they were not accompanied by spiritual growth.

Of the many revivals hosted by the church as a means of bolstering spiritual growth, perhaps none was more revealing of the times than the citywide Home Visitation campaign of January 1924. Organized by J. Shreve Durham of the International Sunday School Association of Chicago, the focus of the campaign was the coordination of a religious census of Greensboro’s residents by Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish volunteers. On the afternoon of Friday, January 11, 1924, 1,627 volunteers fanned out across the city to ask residents if they were actively connected with a church or synagogue and, if not, what their religious preference was. To assist the effort, schools were let out early so that children could help in greeting the volunteers at homes. Approximately 47,900 responses were gathered with only 132 individuals reported as being unwilling to state a religious preference. On Saturday afternoon pastors were invited to the chamber of commerce office to receive the sorted response cards. As a follow-up, revival services were planned across town for every night of the following week with a Welcome Day hosted for visitors at local churches on Sunday, January

27. First Baptist was asked to pay its share of the expense involved in the project, expected to be fifty to sixty dollars. (After considerable discussion, deacons declined to place newspaper advertisements costing four hundred dollars.) A special day of fasting and prayer was to be observed at the church on January 16, with the church open for prayer meetings in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings for one week beginning on January 20. The rapid church growth that characterized much of the era between the world wars can be understood only in the cultural context of a society that believed religious activity beneficial to the city's prosperity. Dr. Turner was likely to object whenever emphasis on the latter came at the expense of the former; for now, however, they remained linked.

On July 3, 1922, deacons elected Brothers Walter W. Rowe and John Thomas as honorary deacons for life in view of their long service to the church. The first time he appears in church records, Thomas was elected in 1885 as one of the church's ushers. His grandmother, Mrs. Mary Thomas, and aunt, Mrs. Martha Newton, were among those women who constituted the earliest congregation of Baptists in Greensboro. Rowe joined the church in 1883 as a young dentist recently graduated from the University of Maryland and soon married the daughter of a missionary and pastor. Together, Thomas and Rowe were among the last who could remember when the congregation had met in the little brick church on South Elm Street. Although they had witnessed many things, the pace of change occurring in the postwar years, when evangelism borrowed the tools of mass marketing, must have strained their imaginations. The fact that J. Clyde Turner remained the church's pastor throughout this period and beyond, as the boom years of the 1920s gave way to the bust of the Great Depression, does not obscure the fact that in many ways the church he led now was not the same as the one which had called him.

# 7

## Wonderfully Blessed

*God has wonderfully blessed his quarter century of service.*

—Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Service for  
Dr. and Mrs. J. Clyde Turner, December 1, 1935

When deacons gathered to meet, as they did in October and November 1925, they dealt with a wide variety of proposals and concerns. There was a proposal from the Woman's Missionary Union at the October meeting, for example, to identify Baptists who moved to Greensboro by keeping a file of index cards organized by geographical regions, with the men of the church helping by visiting prospects and the youth by checking local rooming houses and the YMCA for newcomers. A plan for greeting visitors on Sunday mornings called for stationing deacons at church doors. Dr. Turner reported that the city's Baptist ministers had agreed to contribute one thousand dollars to the building fund of Glenwood Baptist Church; First Baptist was apportioned five hundred dollars of that amount. This was followed by an inconclusive discussion about taking part in the evangelistic campaign of Mordecai F. Ham and song leader W. J. Ramsey of Chattanooga, Tennessee, in a revival planned for the following spring that was being sponsored by the city's other churches.

In November a report was received that pledges toward the current expense and building funds amounted to \$21,419.16 and for benevolences of \$15,584.60. (For the current year, 160 members did not pledge anything; 30 had decreased, while 242 had increased their pledges. Old pledges had not been paid in full by 365 members. This information was referred to the finance committee for further action.) Income flow was important: receipts for October were only slightly ahead of disbursements, and there was a sense among deacons that the church was not living within its budget. Although a crisis might be in the offing, repairs to the building were pressing. Heating would be a problem during the win-

ter, and a debt of \$25,000 on the recent construction of Sunday School rooms still needed to be serviced. Dr. Turner was also urging the diaconate to think about the best means for providing for the future growth of the church.

In short, then, the fall of 1925 marked a time when church affairs had come into a maturity that made the days of J. B. Richardson and W. R. Gwaltney seem long ago. Those days had not been forgotten, however, due to the diligent effort of Dr. Walter W. Rowe. In June 1926, deacons learned from Dr. Turner that Rowe was writing a history of the church, which in turn the diaconate agreed to underwrite so that it could be published. Soon, the little book, written by a prominent dentist who had been a member of the church for forty-three years, was available to the congregation. In later years, it would be given to members when they joined the church.

The history would be one of Rowe's last services to the church. He died in December 1932. By then the church was enduring the bleakest years of the Great Depression. Not that despair had triumphed; the twenty-fifth anniversary of the beginning of Clyde and Bertha Turner's ministry in Greensboro was celebrated in 1935; and in March 1938, when German troops were marching into Vienna and the threat of war replaced concerns over unemployment, the congregation authorized the purchase of land on Mendenhall Street between Gaston Street and Guilford Avenue for the construction of a new church.

For most Americans who did not depend on farming for their livelihood, the Depression came with little forewarning. For the church the hopefulness of the 1920s reached their peak with Dr. Turner's participation in the fourth Congress of the Baptist World Alliance meeting in Toronto in June 1928. The gathering was described in the *New York Times* as "possibly the greatest Protestant religious meeting ever assembled on this continent." Furman University President Edwin M. Poteat, who as a boy had listened to the preaching of Elias Dodson, delivered one of the addresses on June 24, warning Baptists not to confuse denominational partisanship with missionary zeal. Turner spoke that evening to a huge rally of the Young People's Union in a sermon entitled, "The Visions of Youth." With his text taken from Acts 2:17: "And your young men shall see visions," Turner warned how a society given over to materialism, pleasure, and war need not be surprised if the visions of its youth were gold, palaces, and battlefields. "And that is the duty which the church owes to her young people today, to create conditions in which it will be easy for her youth to catch visions of eternal things."

Turner had no way of knowing that his society's illusions of materialism and pleasure would soon be dispelled by brutal economic reality. What began as a stock market crash on Wall Street in October 1929 was quickly followed by the

worst economic crisis of modern times. At the end of 1930, deacons appointed a committee to form plans for employing those who were out of work. Deacon J. D. Wilkins reported in February 1931 that he had mailed a letter to the members asking that notices be given to the church office of any work that could be done by the congregation's unemployed. That these efforts were woefully insufficient became apparent later in the year when Dr. Turner suggested the formation of another committee to oversee welfare and relief work in the church and to coordinate such efforts with like-minded agencies in the city for the coming winter when hardships would be most keenly felt.

Contributions to the church also fell. Wilkins reported to deacons in October 1932, as the Depression entered its worst months, that giving in benevolences had slumped. A special emergency offering in 1931 had raised the amount contributed in the first nine months of the year to \$16,898, a modest increase over the 1930 amount of \$15,762.43. For the same period in 1932, however, only \$13,954 had been contributed. The final amount for 1932 was approximately \$5,000 less than the \$19,886 given the previous year. The 1932 Thanksgiving Day offering to Mills Home of \$328.52, the pastor informed deacons, was approximately \$200 less than the previous year. If Turner had "no satisfactory explanation" for the shortfall, he certainly understood its import. In the church auditorium the Mordecai F. Ham Evangelistic Party had launched a city-wide campaign; before its arrival the Greensboro Baptist Pastors Conference had asked Turner to advise the campaign of the churches' cooperation but not to assume there would be any financial assistance.

The new year showed no improvement. As of January 2, 1933, the number of pledges stood at 729, a decrease of eighty-nine from 1932. Contributions both to current expenses and benevolences—the two major divisions of the budget—were also down, evidenced, for example, by the decline in the amount sent to the Foreign Mission Board to support the salary of Dr. and Mrs. W. Carey Newton in Shanghai, China. And still the bottom had not been reached.

Early in 1931, the Turners moved out of the parsonage and into a home they had built on West Market Street. Deacons determined that the Turners were entitled to the rent on the parsonage, once it had been repainted and the roof repaired and then let out to a new tenant; but Dr. Turner declined the payment, which meant the church could count on receiving an extra sixty dollars a month. More substantial aide came in 1930 when the provisions of Coca-Cola bottler and distributor J. B. Harrison's will revealed that the church would be the beneficiary of twenty-five thousand dollars, to be paid over three years, for the improvement of the present building or the construction of a new one. Still saddled with the debt incurred from the basement construction of Sunday School space,

this income allowed the church to pay off its mortgage in an increasingly difficult time.

Just how difficult became startlingly evident during the banking crisis that hit in the weeks leading up to the inauguration of President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt. Two Greensboro banks that held church funds closed late in February 1933, soon after the church had sent its final mortgage payment of more than fifteen thousand dollars. The check had cleared the bank on which it was drawn but had not yet been credited by the insurance company holding the mortgage. While finance committee chairman Judge William M. York did not think the church liable for additional interest if the payment was deemed late, Dr. Turner nevertheless concluded there was a moral liability. Fortunately the matter was happily resolved by September when the insurance company, which had credited the payment, mailed the now-cancelled note to the church.

Meanwhile Dr. Turner reported that the church was running on a cash-only basis for March, with earlier checks totaling \$2,469.76 sent to the convention's benevolence fund in Raleigh having not yet cleared the bank. Judge York reported keeping \$42.54 collected for the Fellowship Fund (intended to assist needy members of the congregation) in a safe in his office because of the uncertainty surrounding the banks. By April the church had no cash on hand, with \$1,251.57 tied up in two banks, one bank having closed and the other allowing withdrawals of only five percent of deposits. Howard Gardner, treasurer of the current expense fund, reported that he was paying all bills in cash, and J. D. Wilkins said that he was sending offerings to the benevolence fund by postal money order. The church survived the emergency—by May the current expense account was out of debt and new accounts were opened in federally insured banks after January 1, 1934—but the Depression was far from over.

Contributions to the church declined precipitously. Giving in both current expenses and benevolences fell from 1930 to their low point in 1934 by nearly one-third, whereupon they began to increase slowly, although the level of giving for 1930 would not be exceeded until 1937. A sharp recession that year, prompted by curbs in federal spending, again brought a decline in church giving, which meant that the decade came to a close with contributions remaining nearly flat, a remarkable enough feat of perseverance during a time of unrelentingly high unemployment rates that was only made possible by a congregation that continued to grow in size. In an effort to help make ends meet, the church staff was also willing to sacrifice, as the pastor made clear with a paper he read to the church conference on January 6, 1932. Signed by Turner, education director O. E. Lee, and financial director Miss Lillie Matthews, the proposal called for a voluntary reduction in staff salaries of 8 percent. Not until the 1937



budget would these reductions be restored, and even then Turner refused to accept the increase; by then the church was also able to employ a hostess and a youth and music director.

The church responded to the needs of the Depression in a variety of ways. In an attempt to increase stewardship, the finance committee and diaconate outlined in September 1935 the “Tither’s Test Movement,” in which members were asked to test tithing for the months of October, November, and December “and experience for themselves the spiritual blessings that come to a tither.” (The congregation also approved an accompanying motion “to allow the tithe to be administered according to the conscience of the individual under the guidance of the Holy Spirit stressing the fact that the Church is God’s treasury on earth.”) Finance committee chairman York reported the following month that 268 tithing cards had been signed. There was also a strong sense of volunteerism at work in the church. At the same time, deacons were emphasizing the importance of tithing, they were also thanking church members for supplying at their own expense materials and labor needed to repair the tile work around fireplaces in several Sunday School rooms and to seed the lawns around the building. For needy members, goods from coal to milk were supplied through offerings to the Fellowship Fund. Such was the enormity of the hard times that the church’s relief efforts were nearly overwhelmed early in 1936, when members of the church decided to meet with representatives of the city’s welfare and social agencies in an attempt to coordinate plans for providing assistance.

In the midst of these challenges, there was still cause for celebration. On December 1, 1935, the church marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of J. Clyde Turner’s pastorate in a Sunday service of notable fanfare. The day’s silver-trimmed order of worship made clear that on this morning Dr. Turner would not be preaching. Instead, he and Bertha Hicks Turner sat on the front pew, joining the congregation in the singing of “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name,” “How Firm a Foundation,” and “Rock of Ages”—all of which were selected by the pastor as among his favorite hymns. Dr. W. A. Stanbury, pastor of West Market Street Methodist Church, read 1 Corinthians 13—the great hymn to love—and then led the congregation in prayer. In his remarks Dr. Stanbury “mentioned his gratification because of the fine interchurch fellowship which prevails here.” (The anniversary service’s order of worship also carried words of praise from, among others, Dr. Charles E. Myers of First Presbyterian Church, who opined that Dr. Turner had organized what was perhaps the best Sunday School in the state.)

Recognitions were made at the service. Judge York, who presided at the ceremony, called the names of longstanding members of the congregation, begin-

ning with Mrs. Sue Crutchfield, who had been a member of the church for sixty-one years, since 1874, when J. B. Richardson was pastor. Groups of people then took turns standing when called because they had been members of the church when the Turners came to Greensboro or had been baptized or married by Dr. Turner.

Tributes to Dr. and Mrs. Turner followed. Quoting John 1:6: "There

was a man sent from God," Frank P. Hobgood Jr. recounted how he had served on the pulpit committee that recommended Turner's calling, with Hobgood's father telling him how impressed he had been by Turner when they were students at Wake Forest and the reputation he gained from his seminary days at Southern and as a pastor of churches in Newport, Kentucky, and Macon, Georgia. Hobgood concluded that "today Dr. Turner is one of the foremost preachers of the Baptist Faith in America." Dr. C. W. Moseley then described the many changes he and his fellow congregants had witnessed over the past quarter century: growth of the membership from 586 in 1910 to 2,007 in 1935; a total 975 baptisms and 2,808 members received by letter or statement; and a Sunday School membership that had increased from 385 to 2,170. "Let's blaze new trails of holy living in our church and let today be the starting point," Moseley urged his listeners.

Mrs. Turner's role in the church was not overlooked. "We have never known any pastor," declared A. Wayland Cooke, "who was more blessed and helped in



MRS. SUE CRUTCHFIELD

We are dedicating our bulletin today to Mrs. Sue Crutchfield who is celebrating her 93rd birthday. Mrs. Crutchfield has been a member of this church longer than any other person, having been baptized into its fellowship in 1876, and has retained her membership here for 68 years. She makes her home with her son, T. C. Crutchfield, 609 Fifth Ave., and is unusually strong in body and alert in mind for one of her age. May the western sun shine brightly across her path in the days ahead!

Sue Crutchfield pictured in the October 15, 1944, church bulletin. The bulletin gives an incorrect date; having joined in 1874 (Richardson's last year in Greensboro), she had been a member for seventy years when this article appeared.

his work than Dr. Turner." Mrs. Turner taught a large women's class in the Sunday School, and "in the woman's missionary department of the church she has been loyal and faithful and her influence will live long to bless it."

When it came time for him to speak, Dr. Turner read from Luke 6:45: "Of the abundance of his heart his mouth speaketh," and spoke of the occasion. "I would be less than human if I did not appreciate the service today." Turner was grateful at having been received into the congregation's homes and hearts, but, as always with him, his primary concern lay elsewhere. "As we think of the success today the glory does not all belong to us; we remember the faithful members of bygone days who built the foundation, and of the long list of faithful pastors who have served so well. If there is any glory we do not want it for ourselves; we would bring it and place it at the foot of the Cross." Regarding Turner, the church could only conclude that, "God has wonderfully blessed his quarter century of service." The congregation rounded out its service of celebration by singing "Bless Be the Tie That Binds," collecting an offering for the Fellowship Fund, and sharing the Lord's Supper. That evening Dr. Turner returned to the pulpit and, with 3 John 4 as his text, concluded that "no greater joy has any preacher than to see the members of his church giving themselves to the study of God's Word and walking day by day in fellowship with Christ."

The excitement of the day soon gave way to the more mundane activities of the church at work. The close bonds that were the subject of



Dr. and Mrs. Turner pose in the garden behind their house on West Market Street, 1940.

the anniversary celebration's closing hymn were lived out in the fellowship evident in the quarterly church conferences. The meeting of April 8, 1936, was typical of many.

Gathered in the Sunday School auditorium, the conference was called to order at 8:00 on a Wednesday evening. After singing "Blessed Assurance," Dr. Turner led the congregation in prayer. "Bringing in the Sheaves" was sung and followed with another prayer, this one by deacon Charlie W. Jennings (who, in 1909, had been commissioned to collect unpaid pledges). In the absence of treasurer Howard Gardner (who also served as church clerk from 1899 to 1912), clerk W. O. Burnham read the Current Expense Fund report, which was followed by treasurer J. W. Robbins's report of the Benevolence Fund. As Brother York was absent, the clerk also read the Fellowship Fund report. Education director O. E. Lee reported on the Sunday School, which was prayed for by deacon D. A. Kearns. The congregation then sang one verse of "Rescue the Perishing," after which it heard Mrs. O. E. Lee report on the activities of the WMU, including a special study class held at Mrs. Turner's home. Counselors for the various young people's organizations described their activities, whereupon the congregation held a special prayer for missions followed by one verse from "Send the Light." As director of the Baptist Training Union, Brother Lee gave another report and invited representatives of the various unions also to present. Brother V. C. Bradley led another special prayer, this one for the work of the BTU, and the congregation sang another verse, this time from "I Want to Be a Worker." Dr. Turner briefly expounded on John 4:38: "Ye have entered into their labors," after which another hymn, "To the Work," was sung. With a closing prayer the conference ended and the congregation—perhaps thankful that these meetings were only quarterly—went home.

There was something to be said for long meetings at the church, however, when world affairs were steadily growing more appalling. Deacons listened in March 1937 as Dr. Turner read a letter from Dr. John R. Sampey, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, about the need for assistance by churches devastated in the Mississippi River valley in the most destructive flood the nation had ever known. Even worse was the news from overseas. Dr. Charles E. Maddry, executive secretary of the Foreign Mission Board, wrote that war conditions in China required the withdrawal of missionaries; a special offering to assist in the effort was taken on October 10, 1937, with more than one thousand dollars collected. With Europe engulfed in flames in 1940, Turner informed the deacons that hundreds of English Baptist missionaries were being left stranded on foreign mission fields because the war-strapped British government forbade the sending of money out of the country for any purpose, which occasioned the

collecting of another special offering. Closer to home yet another special offering was called for on Sunday, July 27, 1941, to aid in religious work in communities surrounding the growing number of American military bases. Deacons did not even need to vote to show their approval of Dr. Turner's suggestion that the church supply special Sunday School literature to the young men of the church entering military service. The date of the deacons meeting was Monday, December 8, 1941—the day after Pearl Harbor.

The church also struggled with an increasingly troublesome physical facility that was aging and becoming woefully outgrown. As early as 1932, Dr. Turner declared that Sunday School attendance had reached the point that it could no longer be accommodated, this just nine years after the new basement rooms had been opened. The Masonic Temple across the street from the church was willing to rent meeting space, which helped with the Covington class, one of the largest men's Sunday School classes, and eventually the youth departments.

Having enough space was only one problem; what to do with leaking slate and tin roofs when it would cost a thousand dollars to properly repair them and whether the cracked boiler could be fixed instead of replaced—both problems in 1936—were indicative of an aging building. The Church Improvement and Building Fund was established early in 1937 with a view toward receiving contributions to pay for necessary repair—the heating plant, the roof, the need for additional chairs, the replacement of badly worn carpet, and the repainting of interiors— while also gathering the funds necessary to purchase a new site for the church. While following this conservative, pay-as-you-go approach, the church could also plan what the future would look like.

Two initiatives commenced as a result of this early effort. Finance committee chairman William M. York outlined a plan to deacons in May 1937 to begin a building fund campaign that would describe to the membership why this program was needed and to solicit one-year pledges totaling at least \$7,500 in order to match a conditional and anonymous gift of \$2,500. By September 1937, 365 pledges had been secured amounting to \$11,268.60, with \$4,538.66 actually paid. By the time the fund's



William M. York poses for undated photograph that appeared in the 1941 class booklet for the Men's Fellowship Class. Because of its size, York taught this class for many years at locations off the church campus.

second-year campaign began in May 1938, the bulk of the first year's pledges had been paid. These results must have been encouraging, considering that only a fraction of the congregation pledged and that the funds were designated for a lot that had not been located and a building that had not been designed.

A second initiative addressed more immediate concerns with the present facility. In July 1937, J. D. Wilkins reported on behalf of the custodian committee that repairing and re-

painting the present church and Sunday School annex were estimated to cost \$1,975 and that additional work on insulating, lighting, painting, and making miscellaneous improvements on other parts of the building would cost an additional \$3,123. A few cost-cutting measures were found—sections of the boiler that were cracked could be repaired by welding instead of being replaced, for example—and work began.

No matter how necessary the repair work was, the truly exciting news came early the next year when Judge York's building committee had readied its report. On February 21, 1938, Dr. Turner called a special meeting of deacons so that York could present several possible church sites for possible purchase. After due consideration the diaconate unanimously agreed to pursue one: the Balsley property, consisting of approximately seven acres located on North Menden-

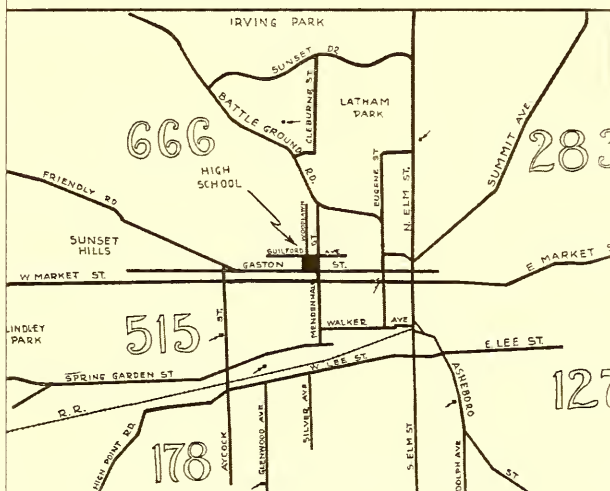
| FORM 2<br>INSTALLMENT CERTIFICATE OF INVESTMENT   |                      |             |                |                |
|---|----------------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|
| No. <u>4561</u> <u>First Baptist Church</u><br><u>Building Fund</u>   |                      |             |                |                |
| HOME INDUSTRIAL BANK, Greensboro, N. C.   |                      |             |                |                |
| In accepting this certificate of investment the owner hereof agrees to and accepts the by-laws of the bank, and all rules and regulations heretofore or hereafter made pursuant thereto, as a part of the contract between the bank and the owner governing this certificate. |                      |             |                |                |
| Date  | Interest or Initials | Withdrawals | Payments       | Amount         |
| <u>March 25 37</u>  | <u>JY</u>            |             | <u>2500.00</u> | <u>2500.00</u> |
| <u>6-16</u>   |                      |             | <u>339.75</u>  | <u>2839.75</u> |
| <u>6-16</u>   | <u>JY</u>            |             | <u>741.20</u>  | <u>3580.95</u> |
| <u>6-21-37</u>  | <u>JY</u>            |             | <u>57.20</u>   | <u>3638.15</u> |
| <u>6-28-37</u>  | <u>JY</u>            |             | <u>64.70</u>   | <u>3702.85</u> |
| <u>7-6-37</u>   | <u>JY</u>            |             | <u>169.90</u>  | <u>3872.75</u> |
| <u>7-12-37</u>  | <u>JY</u>            |             | <u>90.60</u>   | <u>3963.35</u> |
| <u>7-19-37</u>  | <u>JY</u>            |             | <u>144.40</u>  | <u>4107.75</u> |
| <u>7-26-37</u>  | <u>JY</u>            |             | <u>89.41</u>   | <u>4197.16</u> |
| <u>8-2-37</u>   | <u>JY</u>            |             | <u>108.82</u>  | <u>4305.98</u> |
| <u>8-9-37</u>   | <u>JY</u>            |             | <u>86.66</u>   | <u>4392.64</u> |
| <u>8-16-37</u>  | <u>JY</u>            |             | <u>57.65</u>   | <u>4450.29</u> |
| <u>8-23-37</u>  | <u>JY</u>            |             | <u>42.36</u>   | <u>4492.65</u> |
| <u>8-30-37</u>  | <u>JY</u>            |             | <u>51.51</u>   | <u>4544.16</u> |

This is the first page of the bank account book for the Building Fund, 1937. Money from this account was used to purchase the new church lot. The initial deposit—anonymous at the time—represented a gift from Bertha Hicks Turner.

hall Street between Gaston Street and Guilford Avenue and ready to be sold for a price of \$27,500, plus a real estate commission of \$612.50, for a total of \$28,112.50. Notice was given to the church on February 21; and on March 13, 1938, the congregation by unanimous vote approved both the purchase and the securing of a loan of up to \$20,000 for a lot that the authorizing resolution described as "spacious, accessible, located in the center of Greensboro and our Church membership and can be purchased at a reasonable price." It took little more than a year to pay the debt, and on June 25, 1939, a sunny Sunday afternoon, a congregation of about 250 people met on the property and, under the shade of elm trees, burned the notes and dedicated the property. By then, Judge York had been authorized to place a sign on the property (paid for by friends of the church) that proclaimed the site as First Baptist's future home. The congregation was about to undertake a project that few guessed would take so long to complete.

The church bulletin for October 23, 1938, provided a snapshot of the people who composed that congregation. Of the 2,149 members, 1,794, or 83.6 percent, were resident members. Of the resident members, 18.7 percent were under the age of twenty-one. Despite the male leadership of the church, adult women made up 50.7 percent of the con-

*Map Showing Location of Proposed New Church Site*



The black square to which the large arrow points represents the proposed Seven Acre Tract. The figures refer to residences of our local membership. 666 live West of Elm and North of Market Streets; 515 live West of Elm, South of Market, and North of the Railroad; 178 live West of Elm and South of the Railroad; 127 live East of Elm and South of Market Streets; 283 live East of Elm and North of Market Streets.

**LOCATION:** The proposed new site is in the center of Greensboro, one block from West Market Street, on Gaston and Mendenhall Streets, and Guilford Avenue. It is one block North and 5 blocks West of our present church.

**ADVANTAGES:** Plenty of land—7 acres; well located; accessible; has streets on three sides; Woodlawn Avenue can be extended thereby making a full city block 300x500 feet; plenty of parking space; 2 bus lines—one on Guilford Avenue, another on West Market Street; no assessments on Mendenhall and Gaston Streets; reasonable price—\$28,112.50.

**RECOMMENDED:** Our Pastor, Deacons, Finance Committee, and Trustees unanimously recommend that we buy this property. All members of our church are earnestly requested to be present Sunday, March 13th, and vote on this proposal.

This map showing the location of the proposed new church site appeared in the bulletin for March 6, 1938.



Although the occasion is unknown, there is a clear sense of the church's crowded conditions at this dinner meeting at the West Market Street church, ca. 1938. Seated at the table in the back of the room and facing the camera are (l. to. r.) Stafford and Jessie Webb, Genter Stephens (music and youth director), Bertha Hicks Turner, O.E. Lee, and S.A. Helms (deacon and Sunday school superintendent).

gregation with 909 women members compared to 550 men (presumably the rest were children). The church had 937 resident families, 611 (65.3 percent) of whom contributed to the church budget.

Someone who was not a member, however, would initiate contributions to a new fund for a church building. John M. W. Hicks was known fraternally as the older brother of Bertha Hicks Turner and nationally as the treasurer (now retired) of James B. Duke's American Tobacco Company. On September 5, 1938, Dr. Turner used the occasion of the monthly deacon meeting to present Judge York with a check for \$1,000 from his brother-in-law with the stipulation that the money not be used to pay the indebtedness incurred in purchasing a new lot but to be set aside for a building. A building fund was established in the spring of 1939 with the call to raise at least \$100,000 for a new building before construction contracts would be let—memory of the crippling indebtedness incurred with the construction of the West Market Street church would often be invoked during the coming years—with the goal of raising this amount in four years. Contributions began to accumulate, with Dr. Turner apprising deacons of a particularly unusual gift. What was one to make of the ladies diamond ring which was sealed in a Building Fund envelope and dropped in a collection plate at the Christmas night service in 1938? Although hard times doggedly persisted, the church had survived the worst and, barring another world war, was poised to move confidently into the future.

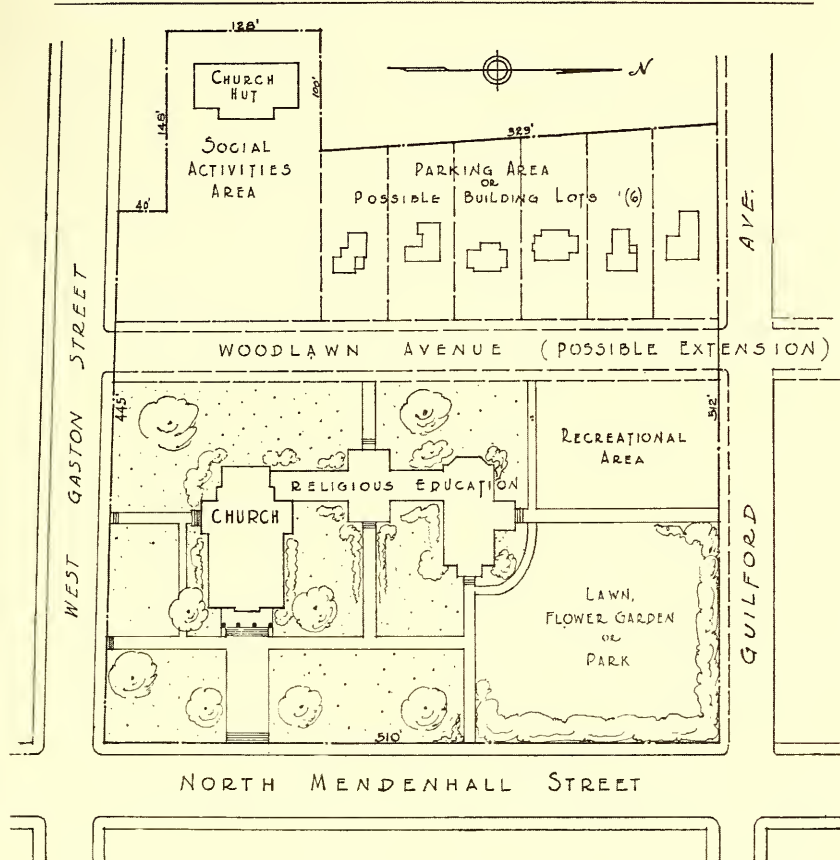
In the midst of all of this, a few glints of humor can be found, even in the minutes of deacon meetings. There was, for example, the letter from an out-of-town visitor that Dr. Turner shared with deacons in 1940 in which the writer complained of having difficulty in locating the church. It seems that he was



*May 25/38*

# First Baptist Church Building Fund

Greensboro, North Carolina



THE ABOVE SHOWS LOT PURCHASED LAST MARCH AND AN ARTIST'S  
IMAGINARY DEVELOPMENT OF IT

The new lot is spacious. If Woodlawn Avenue were extended southwardly to Gaston Street it would divide our lot, leaving a city block, 300x500 feet, bounded by four streets, North Mendenhall Street on the East, Gaston Street on the South, Woodlawn Avenue on the West, and Guilford Avenue on the North. West of Woodlawn Avenue there would be a strip of land 500 feet long with sufficient depth to make about eight nice residential lots.

With this large tract of land, located in the heart of Greensboro, a wonderful Church and Sunday School plant can be developed.

"Let us rise up and build."—Nehemiah 2.18.

This leaflet for the Building Fund was distributed May 25, 1938. Notice how the new church was first envisioned as fronting Mendenhall Street.



The new church property as it appeared in 1939.

standing in front of the building and yet had to inquire of its whereabouts. Dr. Turner asked, wryly perhaps, Brother J. D. Wilkins Jr. to look into whether the present signs required repair. There was also a request from someone to put in a garden at the new lot, and, in 1941, Brother Harry Caldwell moved that the custodian committee look into the question of whether Cary Wright should be allowed to keep his cow on the church lot. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved, although an accounting of the cow's fate never made it into the minute book. (However, J. D. Wilkins Jr. reported at the next meeting that his inspection showed the cow barn to be clean and orderly, and discussion followed about when to clear off the lot and how much doing so would cost.)

Cow barn or not, a new building was badly needed on that lot to relieve the crowding back on West Market Street. At their first meeting in 1940, deacons learned that the crowd attending the Christmas program of December 17, 1939, had taxed the capacity of the church and that an estimated five hundred people were turned away, with a door locked behind them. (The deacon responsible for locking the door expressed regret if anyone's feelings had been hurt.) The arrival of spring brought with it the congregation's decision to contract church planner Dr. Henry E. Tralle to spend a week in Greensboro interviewing members of the church and examining the building lot on West Gaston Street in order to draft a proposal on the kind of church plant that might best suit the interests of the congregation. His report was presented in a brochure that pro-

vided the first illustration of what the new building might look like; true to the tastes of the time, a brick, colonial-revival architecture was selected with the building initially planned to front North Mendenhall Street. On May 19, 1940, the finance committee initiated a new campaign for the building fund, this time depending on personal solicitations made through the Sunday Schools with the goal of raising thirty thousand dollars during the next three years. Ground-breaking was planned for the third year, and, once construction was underway, a fourth-year drive would be undertaken to raise an additional fifty thousand dollars. The plan was an ambitious one. However, for reasons that could have been only dimly foreseen that springtime, when France fell under the heel of the Nazi regime and Britain was battling for survival, the church, together with the nation, would face more urgent concerns by the time 1943 arrived.

Nonetheless, as involvement in a second world war looked increasingly inevitable, there was a sense that the church occupied a different place than it had in earlier years. At home, what was termed “race relations” was growing in importance, however slightly. In February 1939, only weeks before contralto Marian Anderson sang her recital on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, the church welcomed the choir of Palmer Memorial Institute and heard President Dr. Charlotte Hawkins Brown describe the needs of the school. Early in 1940, pastors from Greensboro’s “four Negro Baptist churches”—Providence, United Institutional, Shiloh, and New Zion—met with the pastors of the white Baptist churches. A year later, in 1941, Dr. Turner reminded the congregation that February 9 was “Race Relations Day” across the nation and that “Christians, above all, should set an example in this field.” These were small steps, but they pointed to how the church, if it was to remain relevant, would need to grapple with a changing culture.

If events such as these looked forward to both the promise and the turmoil of the future, there were also other occasions when Dr. Turner was plainly unhappy with how the past was being left behind. In 1944, for example, he appealed (with the support of deacons) to the congregation to subscribe to *To-morrow*, a prohibition newspaper published in Lexington, North Carolina, under the slogan, “That Which Is Morally Wrong Cannot Be Economically or Politically Right.” Hardly a week passed that the church bulletin did not carry some statistic or testimony about the evil effects of alcohol, like the announcement of a newly organized prohibition party that planned to run a presidential candidate in 1940 or the news that citizens in Johnson County, North Carolina, had voted to close liquor stores. Although Turner’s position was clear, “The curse of legalized liquor must go,” there was also a plaintive tone in the appeals, as if the best that could be hoped for now were rearguard

measures such as maintaining a ban on the sale of alcohol on Saturday evenings.

But concerns over the direction taken by society went beyond the narrow one of alcohol consumption. "There is a growing disregard for the Lord's Day in our city," Turner wrote in the bulletin of November 3, 1940. "The golf courses are filled with men and women, which calls for a large crowd of caddies, moving pictures are creeping in in the name of charity, shows are put on at the airport, stores which call themselves drug stores sell almost anything you can find in department stores, and the highways are congested with traffic. Unless the Christian people exert themselves, in a few years the day will be entirely secularized." One church member even recalled Dr. Turner's making clear to an individual who wanted to be a deacon that any man who played golf on Sunday could not fill that office at First Baptist. Whether it was evident at the time, in hindsight these were among the first indications that the culture which had once closed schools in order that a citywide religious census could be taken might not in the future be as sympathetic when social and economic considerations no longer made church attendance a priority.

Such concerns were played out against a background of momentous events around the world. The war in Asia has decimated the Baptist missionary movement in China; although Dr. and Mrs. W. Carey Newton were not in harm's way in September 1937, they were furloughed stateside to Richmond. Once there the church received a letter from Dr. Newton that was enclosed with a check for \$104, to be divided equally between current expenses and benevolences. "You may wonder," Newton wrote, "how one whose first love is in China can give over here when the need there is so entrancing. We know of nothing in Asia so worthy as the First Baptist Church of Greensboro, nor any program equal to the Cooperative Program." In the bulletin for November 6, 1938, Dr. Turner commented on Newton's generosity: "This ought to make many of us ashamed of ourselves."

While emergency aid continued to be sent to China, the church also adopted a new missionary, Arthur S. Gillespie, of the Baptist Mission in Kaifeng, Henan Province. In writing the church at the beginning of 1940 of his appreciation for its support, Gillespie described how he and his family sometimes awoke to the sounds of battle around them, recalling one such fight when he and his wife gathered their three young boys into bed with them and sang, "O How I Love Jesus." Without a trace of irony, Gillespie concluded, "This is a great time to preach the Gospel of Christ in China."

There were also signs of continued mission activity closer to home. In April 1940, Dr. Charles E. Maddry, executive secretary of the Foreign Mission Board,

visited the Forest Avenue church, where in 1906 he had begun his ministry. Shortly after three p.m. on the afternoon of Sunday, April 14, Maddry helped lay the cornerstone of a new church building at the corner of Aycock Street and Walker Avenue, as the Forest Avenue congregation began their transition to become College Park Baptist Church.

Occasionally parting with the past brought a note of sadness as when both Dr. Turner and First Baptist lost a faithful friend with the sudden death of Arthur Wayland Cooke in August 1940. Turner had first met Cooke in 1895 when the two of them entered Wake Forest College as freshmen. The church knew Cooke in the early years of the century after he came to Greensboro as postmaster, later becoming a prominent attorney. Cooke wrote an early history of the church, and, in 1904, he was dispatched with Walter Rowe to interview Drs. Mitchell and Richardson for their memorials of Mary Dixon and Mary Payne. In 1907, the year he was first elected a deacon, Cooke also wrote a eulogy for W. R. Gwaltney. He was a teacher of some standing, and it was to him as leader of the Newton-Baraca Sunday School Class that J. D. Wilkins turned when he wanted to send news about the class to servicemen in the First World War. Turner summed up Cooke's life in simple terms: "A devoted husband, a loving father, a true friend, an upright citizen, a faithful Christian." He was also a link to the past now lost, at the beginning of a war that would break many more.

The church suffered another unexpected loss with the death of education director O. E. Lee on the last day of December 1941. Lee had never completely recovered from surgery the previous year, and his death marked the end of a twenty-year ministry in Greensboro in which the church's Sunday School had grown into one of the largest in the state. The Vacation Bible School he organized in 1922 was one of the first for Southern Baptists. "He has worked too hard, and rested too little," Turner said at the time of Lee's initial hospitalization. After Lee's death Turner described him as pure in heart, humble in spirit, and faithful in service. "He never thought of himself. If he had, he might have lived longer. Day and night he was thinking, and planning, and working for the church he loved, and for the Savior to whom he had dedicated his life." His wife Ethel was as dedicated; newly married when she and Ora arrived in Greensboro, she had since worked in all the departments of the Sunday School, helped lead the young people's departments in the training and missionary unions and taught the Euzelian Class. Turner reported that more than one person had told him they did not see "how she finds time and strength for all the things she does." After her husband's death Ethel Lee continued her involvement in church life for many years, including being employed as the church hostess.

As 1942 began, a church that had seen its fathers fight in one world war was sending its sons and now daughters to fight in a second. This time the effects would be felt more deeply and for a longer time. One of the most immediate was the initiation of a long series of special offerings; in April 1942 it was an offering to support through the Foreign Mission Board the World Emergency Relief Fund. For 1943, the convention's goal was to raise \$500,000 to be used primarily to feed starving millions in free China. "Certainly, with much greater need, we will not do less this year," Dr. Turner encouraged the congregation. "We will bring the condemnation of heaven upon us if we revel in the material plenty of this land and turn a deaf ear to the starving multitudes of other lands, when even a few cents may save a life." The congregation gave nearly one thousand dollars. During that year's Christmas season, the congregation participated in the Southern Baptist Convention's Kits for Russia drive. The convention had set the goal of providing 100,000 of these relief kits containing candy, evaporated milk, bouillon cubes, cookies, socks and gloves, hand towels, soap, knitting needles, sewing notions, and gauze bandages and adhesive tape. In the first drive, which ended in January 1944, the church supplied money for 300 kits; an additional 350 kits were ordered in September 1945.

The war brought logistical challenges to the church. Members were urged in August 1942, for example, not to make a practice of paying their church pledges with War Savings Stamps (originally purchased as down payments on war bonds). A more serious concern was the announcement early in 1943 that Greensboro would be the site of a military training base (which eventually became the Army Air Force Overseas Replacement Depot). C. S. Hodge, the new education director who was also chairing the city churches' camp religious committee, reported that military chaplains had requested that churches provide lounge and recreation facilities for servicemen. Even before ORD was fully operational, the chaplains mentioned two hundred soldiers attending religious services at the camp. The soldier hospitality committee was organized at the church, and by April 1943 plans were in place to host a fellowship hour each Sunday after the evening service for soldiers and their wives or other visitors, with a social also to be held twice each month on Friday evening.

"We have started on a new year," Dr. Turner wrote in the bulletin of January 3, 1943. "Perhaps we have never faced a year with graver possibilities. Who knows what it may bring forth? There will be lights and shadows along the way. We would shrink back were it not for our faith in God. Let us make a good start, and never falter along the way." Both lights and shadows were evident as a group of members began to compile names for the honor roll and service flag that went up in the auditorium on June 20, 1943. Of its original 173 stars, three al-

ready were gold as two church members had died in training in this country, one in action in North Africa. (The honor roll also included a woman, the first of several: Mrs. Josie J. West of the Navy's Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service, or WAVES.) In a letter home Army Air Corps Lieutenant Stafford W. Webb (whose father Stafford R. Webb served many terms as deacon chairman), reflected on what the church meant to him now that he was deployed overseas: "If the people at home were to feel that each service they attend might be their last one, the churches would not hold the people." Another church member in military service, Clyde Harrington of the U.S. Army, had served for a year in England and Africa but did not fail to send his pledge card together with his love and a money order for ten dollars.

Out on West Gaston Street victory gardens were being planted on the church lot. Work toward building the new church was initiated in June 1942 when deacon chairman Webb suggested that an architect be employed to draw up the preliminary plans that would be needed once conditions permitted large-scale civilian construction projects. The following month, upon a deacon recommendation proposed by Harry Caldwell, the congregation directed Dr. Turner to appoint a new building committee to work with the architect, which Turner did by early August; committee members were W. L. Carter, Miss Bessie Matthews, Mrs. Carolyn Stroud, Stafford Webb, J. D. Wilkins Sr., and Bill York. A larger advisory group composed of members of the various departments of the Sunday School, Woman's Missionary Society, and Baptist Training Union was also organized to provide input about how the building should be configured. Wilkins began to correspond with William A. Harrell, secretary of the Department of Church Architecture for the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, supplying Harrell with the information he needed to make suggestions about church de-



correspond with William A. Harrell, secretary of the Department of Church Architecture for the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, supplying Harrell with the information he needed to make suggestions about church de-

J. D. Wilkins Sr. is shown in undated photograph, ca. 1940. Wilkins could be blunt; he wrote William A. Harrell of the Sunday School Board's Department of Church Architecture on January 30, 1947, "that the time has come when we have to quit fooling around and get down to business." If Harrell were not in a position to provide greater assistance, "very frankly, your whole department ought to be abolished."

sign consistent with the ideas put forward earlier by church planner Henry Tralle. At the April 5, 1943 meeting of deacons, Wilkins, who had been quickly chosen to be the building committee's chairman, reported the recommendation that Greensboro architect Albert C. Woodroof be hired to draw up preliminary plans in consultation with the New York firm of Eggers & Higgins. By August the first plans and drawings were in hand although few things were settled. Nevertheless, committee and architect had taken the first steps toward converting dream into reality; given Wilkins's bulldog grip, once begun, the work was not likely to be abandoned.

The war affected church giving in part because membership grew only modestly. The current expenses portion of the proposed 1943 budget that finance committee chairman York presented in November 1942 was unchanged from the current one. York made clear his hope that three Sundays devoted to receiving voluntary pledges would reduce the work that would be required in calling members who did not pledge. In December, Judge York reported the receipt of 990 pledges amounting to \$20,579.49 (slightly under the proposed budget total of \$23,245). There were fewer pledges than in 1942 but more money was pledged. Turner, concerned about the small number of new members either by letter or conversion, thought that the wartime decline in the state's population and the disquieting fact that many who came to live in Greensboro "do not care to affiliate themselves with any church" further complicated the work of the church. When he reviewed the yearly associational letter with deacons in October 1944, Turner noted the addition of only twenty-three new members.

Nevertheless, giving to the building fund continued, and Dr. Turner expressed his hope in March 1944 that within a year the fund would have \$150,000 to invest. At times the congregation must have felt that the new building, so tantalizingly near and yet impossible so long as the war continued, could not come soon enough. An overloaded electrical circuit in the basement played havoc with the lights; an outside water fountain required repairs; the roof was leaking again, once more threatening damage to the organ. Nothing better exemplified wartime extemporizing, however, than the carpeting, which badly needed replacing. "We are endeavoring to make our equipment last as well as we can until we are privileged to have a new building," the bulletin intoned in January 1943. "However, the floor coverings in some of our rooms are almost beyond repair. If you have a discarded rug that is still serviceable, and you would like for us to use it in the church, call Mr. Hodge." A year later the problem remained. Dr. Turner wrote in the bulletin that "every one who comes into our church must notice the shabby condition of the carpet. It is worn and patched beyond decency. Not one of us would have it in our home for a day. In view of the fact that



it will be several years before we can build, something ought to be done, and done at once, even though it costs something.” But laying new carpet required more than spending money; in the wartime economy, the only carpet that could be procured came in narrow woolen strips. Maroon was chosen as the color to use.

Even under these conditions church planting did not cease. Turner informed deacons in April 1943 that residents along the far western edge of Greensboro were interested in organizing a Baptist church. Working with Wilson Woodcock, pastor of College Park Baptist Church, and the Home Mission Board, Turner located a lot on the corner of Holden Road and Walker Avenue that was available at a cost of fifteen hundred dollars. The purchase ran into complications as the deed prohibited the use of the property for a church, but by 1945 the title had been cleared. Even so it would be several more years before the Lindley Park mission came to fruition.

“Ere the year shall come to a close,” Dr. Turner wrote in the bulletin for January 2, 1944, “we hope this terrible war, which has taken so many of our young men and women and brought so much suffering to the earth, may be over.” Before then the church grieved for the loss of one of its closest sons. On October 15, 1943, Stafford W. Webb’s B-17 Flying Fortress was reported to be one of sixty-two American planes that went down in enemy fire after a bombing raid the previous day—“Black Thursday” for the U.S. Eighth Air Force—on the ball-bearing plants of Schweinfurt, Germany. Now, early in the new year, the grim news arrived. “In April, 1927, a little curly-haired lad of eight years was baptized into the fellowship of this church,” Dr. Turner wrote in the bulletin for January 9, 1944. “Truly may it be said of him that he grew up in the church, taking an active part in its various organizations. With keen mind and clean life, he easily became a leader. Having received the best of training in home, church, and school, he faced life with brightest prospects. Then came the war and the call of his country. He responded to that call and dedicated all of his splendid powers to the cause of freedom.” A memorial service for Lieutenant Webb was held on January 30. On the occasion of his twenty-fifth birthday on August 24, 1944, these lines written by him were printed in the bulletin:

And though the paths of time seem hard,  
And though the ways seem rough,  
And though the breaks have all gone wrong,  
And jobs have all been tough;  
If we have fought for things worthwhile,  
Then God will say “Enough.”

The flowers his widow Gertrude placed in the church on October 15, 1944, marked the first anniversary of the reporting of his missing. The day was also the second anniversary of the couple's wedding.

How Clyde Turner weathered the strains imposed by the war is unclear, but at the deacon meeting of September 4, 1944, he remarked "that he felt his term of useful service was shortening." His hope was that during whatever time remained the church "would take on new interest and enthusiasm for soul winning." Mercifully, the war was drawing to a close. The end in Europe had been anticipated for weeks, until VE Day was proclaimed on Tuesday, May 8, 1945. That evening special services of thanksgiving were held in churches across the city, including First Baptist, where "all available space was occupied." A presidential proclamation called for thanksgiving and prayer on Sunday, May 13, when the month of official mourning for the death of President Roosevelt ended. The bulletin for that Sunday excerpted a letter "from one of our boys beyond the Rhine in Germany," who wrote that, "God willing, I hope the day will soon come when all the 300 stars in our Service Flag will be 300 serving Him who has seen fit for us to return."

That, of course, would not happen until Japan surrendered; and through the summer of 1945, no one knew when that would be. Turner would have missed



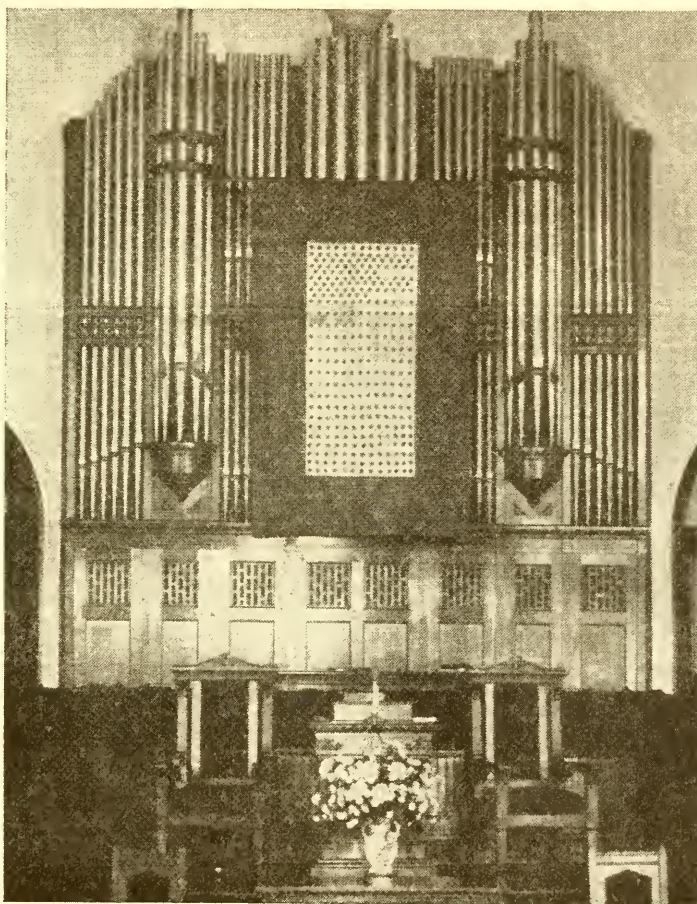
Lieutenant Stafford Webb poses with his B-17 flight crew, July 28, 1943. Webb is the fourth officer standing from the right.

# Memorial and Honor Service

For Those Who Served Our Country In World War II

**First Baptist Church**  
Greensboro, North Carolina

Sunday Morning, October 13, 1946



This is the church's service flag as it appeared on Sunday, October 13, 1946, when it was retired from the sanctuary.

this second occasion of celebration had he not returned to the church from vacation to conduct a funeral when VJ Day was proclaimed on Wednesday, August 15, 1945. Already the previous Tuesday evening, as word of the final surrender flashed across the country, people spontaneously came into the church, where C. S. Hodge led a brief, impromptu service. The service which Turner attended on Wednesday evening was also informal. The auditorium was filled, with about half of the congregation composed of families with members who had served in the military. Receiving special recognition were veterans who had already been discharged and returned home. "Appropriate scripture passages were read, songs of praise were sung, prayers of gratitude were uttered, testimonies emphasizing special causes for thanksgiving were given." Not surprisingly, a note of sadness ran through a service otherwise filled with joy, "for there is a group of golden stars on our flag representing those who will not come back." When, at a memorial and honor service held on Sunday, October 13, 1946, the service flag was finally lowered, it contained 327 stars representing the congregation's young men and women, including fifteen gold ones.

Although the nation was narrowly speaking at peace, wartime impatience with construction restrictions could not be immediately satisfied. "We all recognize the inadequacy of our building to care for our growing work," Turner wrote in the bulletin for October 8, 1945. "We wish we could begin our new building at once, but conditions in the building trades are such as to make it impossible. No one knows when a propitious time will come. Even if conditions were favorable, we do not have enough money in hand to warrant the launching of an enterprise of that magnitude." Turner could only resign himself to the obvious: "It looks as if we may have to wait another year or two."

The wait was trying. At a special meeting on April 24, 1946, deacons were informed of the results of a visit by the city building inspector: because of deformed and cracked roof trusses, the inspector had no choice but to condemn the building for further use until repairs were made. Church custodians had requested the inspection because they found that the truss at the north end of the building was beginning to come apart, causing it to buckle and move sideways. The absolute necessity of correcting the problem immediately was underscored by Stafford R. Webb, who estimated that the truss was bearing approximately 150,000 pounds of pressure. In addition, the truss over the Sunday School auditorium had buckled and shifted out of place, and the truss over the main door was also found to be cracked. Repairs were made and were followed by others—replacing root-infested terra-cotta sewage pipes with steel ones and fixing warped windows—and the old church was able to keep its doors open.

Although still a dream, the new church was taking form if only in corre-

spondence and architectural sketches. For J. D. Wilkins, however, progress was too slow; and so he made arrangements to send Frank L. Stubbs, the church's new education director, to Nashville. "My idea is that he will sit down with your architects and attempt to reach some definite and final decisions about this whole Educational Building layout," Wilkins wrote in January 1947 to William A. Harrell. "We have been playing along with it now for years and have gotten nowhere definitely, and the time has come when we have to quit fooling around and get down to business." Wilkins was clear in his expectations. He wanted the Sunday School Board's Department of Church Architecture to provide direction in how to plan a church facility that could accommodate the needs of a baby-booming generation (if it could not, "very frankly, your whole department ought to be abolished"), and he wanted plans for a building that would be "just as condensed, as small and as economical as is possible within reason, bearing in mind that we must build for the future." Harrell was reassuring, and he described a process in which his department was both preparing suggested layouts and responding to program requirements put forward by the church. Meanwhile, Vander Liles conveyed to deacons suggestions he had gathered from *The Sunday School Builder* that churches should provide nurseries and kindergartens for the children of working mothers and that more room should be provided for adult meeting spaces than was anticipated as being needed because of the tendency to underestimate requirements.

When J. Clyde Turner accepted the call of First Baptist to come to Greensboro in 1910, he preached in a church building only four years old. Now, thirty-seven years later, with plans for a new church beginning to take shape, Turner made an announcement that stunned many, however much it



Frank L. Stubbs (education director from 1946 to 1949) works with with an unidentified group of volunteer workers at the West Market Street church. Alice Straughan was able to renovate the church library in 1947, including cataloging books, which is what these young people appear to be doing.

may have been anticipated. "They have been happy years," he wrote on November 30, 1947, "and have passed all too quickly. I am sorry that the record of service has not been better. I find myself wishing that I could go back and try again, but the years have gone, never to return. You have been wonderfully patient and forgiving toward my failures and mistakes, which have been many." Nonetheless, Turner acknowledged that, should he live, he would turn seventy years old on March 31, 1948. "The Lord has been gracious in giving me health and strength. But when a man reaches that age, he has to slow down." On his next birthday, therefore, Dr. Turner would resign his pastorate. "You will agree with me that this is no time for the work of this church to slow down. Rather, it is a time for making large plans for the future, and prosecuting those plans vigorously."

Deacon chairman Stafford R. Webb wrote of the church's appreciation: "We have come to feel the need of his help, but as 'the old order changes yielding place to new,' may our devotions in the future of the work that has now been so close to his heart, be a measure of our regard for him and reflect the teaching we have received from him through these years." A congregation trying to imagine what it would be like to be in a new building would now have to conceive of making their move with a new pastor.

## FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

J. CLYDE TURNER, Pastor

WEST MARKET AND EUGENE STS.

GREENSBORO, N. C.



*The Bulletin today is lovingly dedicated to Dr. and Mrs. Turner on their Thirty-fifth Anniversary in our Church*

GREENSBORO PRINTING COMPANY

The church bulletin for December 2, 1945, marked the thirty-fifth anniversary of Dr. Turner's pastorate.

# 8

## Doing Business for God

*Years after we are gone our church will be doing business for God.*

—Church bulletin, May 29, 1949

Years after the event educational director C. S. Hodge recalled a Sunday morning when he was walking down the narrow, dark hallway that led to the furnace room and that constituted the closest thing to a Sunday School office in the crowded church on West Market Street. To Hodge's surprise, he encountered J. Clyde Turner leaning against the wall, quietly moving his lips and unaware of Hodge's presence. "I feared he might be having a stroke," Hodge remembered, "so I asked him if he were ill." Turner's response was a simple one. "He merely turned to me with that benevolent smile and said, 'No, my son, I was just going over my morning sermon.'"

Although too numerous to count, congregational recollections such as Hodge's testified to the staying power of Turner's presence. As his departure was paced to accommodate the modern requirements of a pulpit committee that needed a longer period to search far and wide for a successor—Turner delayed his leaving from March 31 to the end of July 1948—there would be much time to reflect on his ministry. For now, however, more immediate tasks had to be faced. Vacation Bible School for the summer of 1948 was cancelled because of a polio epidemic. Dr. Turner called deacon attention to the organization of the Lindley Park Mission by interested persons living in the western part of the city and, with deacon approval, determined that he would appoint a church committee to help organize a new church. Closer to home, the Masonic Temple announced that monthly rent for Sunday School space would rise to eighty dollars. And in the old church itself, Dr. Turner recommended that new carpet be secured for the Ladies Parlor and a pastor's study prepared for the arrival of his successor, as hopes to build a new facility continued to recede into the future.

The pulpit committee had determined by the end of July 1948 that it would recommend as Turner's successor a forty-year-old pastor serving the Calvary Baptist Church of Jackson, Mississippi: Claud Ballard Bowen. Having initially declined the offer to come to Greensboro, Bowen remembered Dr. Turner shaming him at the 1948 session of the Southern Baptist Convention in Memphis by saying, "I don't think you did those people right in Greensboro." The young pastor's final decision to accept a call to Greensboro was announced at a special meeting of deacons



Claud Bowen and J. Clyde Turner pose for undated photograph, ca. 1948.

on June 30, 1948. Bowen appeared a good match for First Baptist, both complimenting and contrasting Turner's qualities. In Bowen's eight years at Calvary Baptist—a church with a membership larger than any in North Carolina—his congregation retired a debt of ninety thousand dollars, renovated the church building and parsonage, purchased a neighboring apartment building for use as a nursery, established a mission in another part of the city, sponsored two missionaries to China, erected an educational building, increased dramatically its mission giving, and only a year earlier announced plans to build a new facility to relieve the church's overcrowding. In addition Claud and his wife Louise would bring to Greensboro their three children: Claud Davis, age nine; Richard, age six; and nineteen-months-old Carol Ann. For the first time in more than a generation, the church would know a pastor with a growing, young family.

In tribute to Dr. and Mrs. Turner, the congregation gathered on July 30, the Friday evening before his last Sunday as the church's pastor, at the church property on Madison Avenue (formerly Gaston Street). Deacon chairman Stafford Webb presented a leather-bound volume of 155 letters written by denominational, political, and civic leaders and members of the congregation expressing in terms from simple to florid appreciation for the couple's years of service. A few examples: George R. Bennett declared, "I am writing this to tell you that to me you have meant more than any one other than my Mother, in trying to live a Christian life." James M. Cates Jr. mused, "The first thing I remember was when our church had a picnic at Thomasville there was a baseball game and you knocked a home run. From that day on you were a hero to me." Former city mayor and church deacon Roger W. Harrison recalled Turner's dependable pres-



ence: "You have baptized my children and my two oldest grandchildren, officiated at the marriages of my three daughters, visited my sick, and buried my dead, and have been so nice to my sick wife during the last two years. I will never forget this." And of his everyday demeanor, church janitor Henry Lofton wrote, "I have found him to always be the same with me up until the present time and I do know he is a Christian gentleman."

However warm the tributes, Turner remained his usual, composed self. In the week's church bulletin, he simply noted, "Next Sunday will bring to a close the present pastorate of thirty-seven years and eight months. There will be no farewell message, but services as usual, praying that souls may be saved, hearts quickened, and God glorified." Responding to a query from Mrs. Gladys York for biographical information, Bertha Turner observed that "Clyde seems to think there is nothing especially outstanding to record. Certainly his has been a life devoted to a high ideal which he has not turned aside. The results have been most gratifying and we rejoice in the continued progress being made." Turner closed his valedictory remarks in the August 1, 1948, church bulletin by observing how happy the years in Greensboro had been. "Looking back over these years, we are deeply conscious that the record might have been much better, but it is too late to change it now. Your kindness to Mrs. Turner and me has been unfailing, and we are deeply grateful. We shall ever look back on these years in Greensboro with happy memories, and shall not cease to pray for this

church which will continue to hold a large place in our hearts." He may not have been in the pulpit on the first Sunday in September 1948, when Claud Bowen began his pastorate, but his presence would continue to be felt, just as his return visits to the church would become a fixture for years to come.

"This Is Your Church—Let's Fill It



Dr. Turner strikes an appropriate pose for the unveiling of his portrait at the Masonic Temple on April 16, 1958. With him are, l. to r., his wife Bertha Hicks Turner, Z. H. Howerton of the Covington Bible Class (which commissioned the portrait and, because of its size, met at the Temple), and artist Henry Rood Jr. After his death in 1974, Turner's niece returned the portrait to the church where it is now displayed.

Next Sunday," proclaimed the church bulletin the week before Claud Bowen's arrival. By then, however, the Bowens had already received a welcome of sorts, by driving downtown on the Wednesday evening before the installation service and, seeing lights on in the church, stopping to find Mrs. Ethel Lee hosting a supper for a group of young people. The Bowens introduced themselves and joined in the meal; across the years Dr. Bowen would be noted for retaining his affinity for youth. Meanwhile, a brick house on Camden Road had been secured that would serve as a temporary parsonage, with a lot for a permanent parsonage on the corner of Greenway and Madison Avenues purchased soon afterward for five thousand dollars.

The installation service was held on Sunday morning, September 5, 1948. Words of welcome were spoken by chairman of deacons Stafford Webb on behalf of the church members; by Dr. Joseph M. Garrison, pastor of the Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, on behalf of the Greensboro Ministerial Association; and by M. A. Huggins, general secretary-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention, on behalf of North Carolina Baptists. Little time remained for Bowen to say much of anything although after observance of the Lord's Supper he did pledge to the congregation to carry forth the work of Dr. Turner. That evening, he preached to another crowded auditorium the sermon "The Gospel Is Not Bound."

For the next few years the work of the church also seemed to know no bounds. Not surprisingly, with the advent of a new and young pastor, church membership continued to grow. But the most dramatic increase in numbers was among those too young to appreciate Dr. Bowen's preaching. In January 1949, nursery workers reported caring for fifty-three children in four nurseries during the Sunday School hour, nearly all of whom were two- or three-year olds. Cradle Roll Day was observed the next year on May 21, 1950, with a bulletin printed on pink paper and listing ninety-six names on the nursery rolls. (One can only imagine what the morning service was like as the babies were briefly brought into the sanctuary!) By 1953, soon after the congregation moved into the new church on Madison Avenue, the Cradle Roll-Nursery Day observance showed seventy-four names on the cradle roll, with a total of seven nurseries and 215 names.

Baby boomer parents swelled the ranks of the adult Sunday School, where meeting "standards" became the talk of the day with descriptions of Sunday School expectations published in February 1949. According to the Adult Standard of Excellence, for example, officers for each class were to be chosen (with the approval of the teacher, who was elected by the church); programs of visitation and evangelism instituted; age grading observed (with classes organized

by gender and teacher and class of the same sex); goals for using Bibles and attending preaching to be reached; and meetings to be observed, with class time of at least thirty minutes and either a weekly class officers meeting or a monthly class business meeting.

Church membership grew of its own accord, requiring little assistance from organized evangelistic efforts, as Greensboro's population and economy boomed. The Sunday School's Adult Department No. 1, for example, was noted in July 1949 to have doubled its enrollment during the previous three quarters. "So many fine people are moving to Greensboro," Dr. Bowen wrote in the bulletin for July 17, 1949, "that I feel we should double our effort to invite them to make their lives count for Christ in our city. Would it not be tragic to let a family move here and not be invited personally to unite with the church?" Bowen went on to observe the following week that he had received the names of eleven families who had moved to the city, and he urged the congregation to continue to collect the names of prospects. "I am not making this request simply for members; however, we want to reach as many people as we possibly can." One newcomer to Greensboro later described Bowen as "a man's pastor" who went after young men, knowing that if he could draw them into the church, their families would follow.

Bowen needed an associate with the energy to corral this new herd, and in October 1949, he found him in an individual who had worked with him briefly in Jackson, Mississippi, before being called up for military service: Samuel Clyde Ray. Personnel committee chairman J. D. Wilkins had located Ray working as the educational director of Main Street Baptist Church in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. When "S. C.," as he had been known since childhood, and his wife Marjorie, whom he had known as "Marjie" when they were both students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, arrived in Greensboro to begin his work as First Baptist's educational director, they stayed for a short while in a hotel across the street from the lot on Madison Avenue purchased years earlier by the church. If it was a challenge to imagine that a new church would one day be built on that vacant lot, it must have been even more difficult for S. C., Marjie, and daughters Susan and Joan to believe that S. C. would work at that church until he retired as associate pastor in 1981.

Of all the signs of church growth, none was more exciting than the one evidenced in the spring of 1949. At the April deacons meeting, building committee chairman Wilkins announced that he was presently expecting the latest in a seemingly endless series of sketches and estimates of the new church facility. By May architect A. C. Woodroof's colored drawing of the new church was on display, with two Wednesday evenings devoted by the congregation to prayer and

discussion of the building plans. "The time is right," Judge York declared, "but we have tremendous obstacles to overcome." Although the church had over the years set aside \$300,000 for the building, more than three times that amount would be needed. If another \$300,000 could be raised



The building committee shown in 1950. Seated l. to r., are J. D. Wilkins Sr., Mrs. Moody Stroud, Miss Bessie Matthews, Stafford Webb, and W. L. Carter; standing, l. to r., William M. York, Claud Bowen, and A. C. Woodroof. (Mrs. Harry Owen later replaced Mrs. Stroud on the committee.)

through an intensive fund-raising drive during the next two or three years, according to York's calculations, the church would be in a good position to borrow the remaining \$400,000 that the project was estimated to cost.

Rapid growth in membership since the war had already demonstrated the congregation's financial wherewithal: Bill York was confident enough in November 1948 to announce that the finance committee planned a 20 percent increase in the 1949 budget over current receipts! Now led by a young pastor with a reputation as a church builder, the momentum to complete what had been begun before the war proved irresistible. At a congregational meeting on Wednesday evening, May 4, 1949, a resolution was formally presented stating that church members "immediately launch a campaign to secure pledges totaling \$295,000.00 payable over a period of two years," with the remaining \$400,000 to be borrowed to pay for construction of a new church and religious education building. As it had with previous resolutions going back to 1937 regarding the relocation and construction of a new church, this resolution was approved by unanimous vote.

"This day is one of the great days in the history of this church," proclaimed the bulletin on May 22, 1949. "What we pledge [today] will largely determine how soon we can have a new church plant. Please ask our Heavenly Father to give you courage to do your best. Everyone must do the very best possible to make this a victory day." Early indications were hopeful. Amidst the congregation's positive responses was this note to the finance committee: "I have decided

to pay for two years. The finance committee may be able to invest it better than I can and that is another reason—I may not be here in another year and the money *could* get away from me.” In turn the finance committee confidently predicted that “years after we are gone our church will be doing business for God.”

A month later the results were clear: “VICTORY FOR THE LORD” read the headline in the June 29 bulletin that appeared above a letter from finance committee chairman William M. York:

We are humbly and happily grateful that God has helped us reach our Building Fund Goal. To date we have received 1,355 pledges for \$290,909.58; and 23 additional or increased pledges for a total of \$5,321.00, making a grant total of \$296,230.58. As we receive this blessing may we go forward with our building with a prayer that our members of our church may love the Lord more and service him better, and that His will may be done in carrying out His last commission: “Go Ye Therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

The conditions stipulated by the finance committee for beginning construction of the new church building had been met. The most concise statement of what would happen next came in a telegram to Claud Bowen from William A. Harrell, church building consultant with the Sunday School Board in Nashville: “Congratulations. Marvelous Successful Campaign. Time is now.”

As it turned out, “now” did not precisely mean now. There were detailed plans and building specifications to review, contractor bids to receive, and loans to secure. Ground at the church site also had to be tested to be sure it would support foundation walls, and then building committee chairman Wilkins needed to explain to deacons his rationale for modifying some of the building details in order to keep construction costs in line with the church’s financial resources. On July 28, 1950, Wilkins reported to deacons that the total cost of the building and its furnishings would be \$1,052,364.32. At the same meeting, finance committee chairman York provided details about the expected loans and added that the new parsonage on Greenway Avenue could also be built for another \$40,000. Another significant resolution had five pages and was perhaps the lengthiest one ever presented to the membership. Prepared for a congregational vote on August 2, 1950, this one authorized the construction of the new church and religious education building and a parsonage for a total cost not

to exceed \$1,075,000; issuance of contracts to George W. Kane of Durham, Gate City Electric Company, and Dick & Kirkman, Inc.; negotiation of loans with the Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company and Guilford National Bank; and plans for the membership to pledge an additional \$100,000 during the twelve months beginning on June 1, 1952. A groundbreaking ceremony was planned for Sunday, August 6, 1950, with J. Clyde Turner invited to make the principal address. The dream of thirteen years earlier was about to be realized.

Approximately three hundred people gathered at the new church lot on that warm and sunny August afternoon. They were gathered around a platform and truck loaned by the city and positioned along the Guilford Avenue side of the property. The groundbreaking ceremony was being recorded by wire and would be broadcast the next day on radio by stations WFMY and WBIG. Dr. Bowen presided over the ceremony, and he called on S. C. Ray to lead the congregation in singing the hymn "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." After prayer Dr. Bowen recognized invited guests and church committees seated with him on the platform. There was applause for Dr. and Mrs. J. Clyde Turner (with Mrs. Turner invited to greet the crowd, which she did by observing that everyone who knew her knew she was "just simply a pastor's wife"); J. D. Wilkins and the building committee; Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Woodroof; and contractors George W. Kane, Anderson Timberlake, John Dick, Joe Kirkman, and M. A. Dixon.

Congratulatory telegrams were read from former educational directors C. S. Hodge and Frank L. Stubbs; editor of the *Biblical Recorder* L. L. Carpenter; minister of West Market Street United Methodist Church Dr. Eugene Few (whom Bowen said had been the first minister to welcome him to Greensboro); and Greensboro Mayor Ben Cone (who congratulated the church for being the first one in the city to provide adequate off-street parking and space enough for generations to come). Bowen then presented Dr. Turner: "We know not how many plans he made; how much interest there was harbored in his own heart; how many wishes and desires which he never advertised," Bowen commented, "but we know that he must have done a great deal."

For his part Turner allowed that the church would probably have given up its quest to build a new facility had it known thirteen years earlier the obstacles it would face. In his estimation the work of the past year to raise the money necessary to begin construction, a task that seemed impossible for a congregation not possessed of individuals with great wealth, was "the greatest thing this church has ever done in its history" (never mind the hyperbole that earlier generations may have disputed). This accomplishment was made even more significant by the fact that giving for this project never took away from contributing



Dr. Turner speaks at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new church, August 6, 1950.

to the yearly work of the church: from 1939 to 1948, contributions to benevolences increased from twenty-five thousand to sixty-seven thousand dollars; while giving toward current expenses grew from twenty-three thousand to fifty-one thousand between 1942 and 1949. Surely God's hand was at work in this, and the church did well to remember two Bible verses throughout the period. With Psalm 127:1 taken to heart: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it," the church had been able to make the unanimous decision to move its location and then to raise so great a sum of money in the previous year. And as the congregation looked forward to seeing the first shovels of dirt turned at the site, it would continue to remember the injunction of Psalm 115:1: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory." With that, Turner recalled the assurance of Hebrews that a great cloud of witnesses surely had gathered around this scene and invoked the memory of Elias Dodson and his small band of faithful followers who had established a Baptist presence in the town; J. B. Richardson and the few loyal men and women who had built a church on South Elm Street; and W. R. Gwaltney and his congregation who had been forced to rebuild on West Washington Street after fire had destroyed their church. Together with the many others who had followed these pioneers of the faith, Turner imagined the gathered host crying from heaven, "Go on! Go on to victory! In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord!"

The congregation then followed the invited guests a short distance from the platform where four shovels awaited. Once there Dr. Turner was joined by

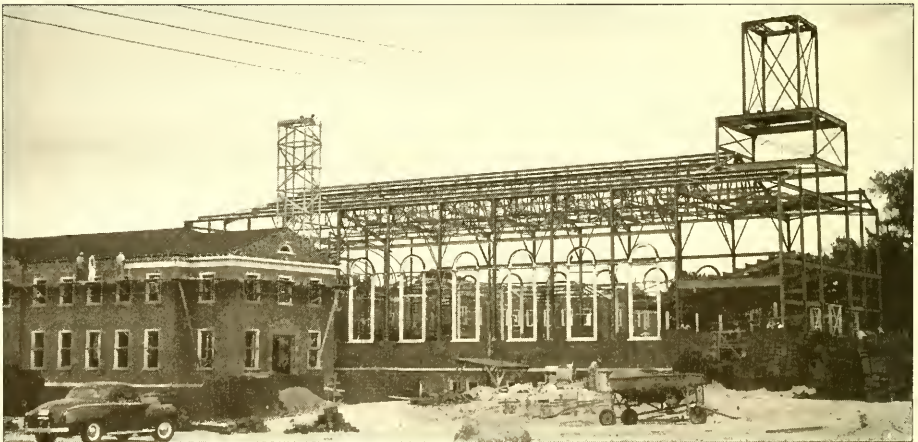
Wilkins, York, and Bowen to turn the first shovels of dirt. Although two years of construction still lay ahead, the members of First Baptist Church could now look at more than balance sheets to see progress being made on the ground.

Construction was soon at full throttle despite the fact that the bulletin that published a photograph of the



Participating in the groundbreaking on August 6, 1950, are (from l. to r.) Dr. Turner, J. D. Wilkins, William M. York, and Claud Bowen.

groundbreaking ceremony also carried the sobering request for names and addresses of all servicemen from the church who were now preparing to go to war in Korea. By March 1951, Stafford Webb reported to deacons that all the steel necessary for the church had arrived at the site. Photographs of the construction began to appear regularly in the bulletin. Bidding for pews and light fixtures was ended as those contracts were finalized. Then, on June 13, 1951, deacons gathered in a special meeting to consider a recommendation from the finance committee that the church accept an offer by First Lutheran Church to purchase the West Market Street property, including organ, pews, floor covers, and light



By the spring of 1951, the new church was taking recognizable shape.



fixtures for \$105,000. After being approved by deacons, the proposal was quickly accepted by the congregation. The new church was literally taking shape even as the old one was about to change hands. At the beginning of September, the bulletin that commemorated Claud Bowen's fourth anniversary as pastor ran a photograph of him standing amid steel beams where the pulpit would be located.

The date for laying the cornerstone was set for Wednesday, October 10, 1951. The partly completed building offered shelter to members gathered on a cold, rainy evening. Dr. Bowen read Ephesians 2:13-22 with its imagery of the household of God resting on a foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone.

In his remarks Dr. Turner declared that "truly this is a day of rejoicing," and he reminded the congregation that "larger facilities call for greater effort." Outside, as trowels were laden with mortar, the crowd surrounded a box that was to be placed into the cornerstone. The members of the cornerstone laying committee, Harry B. Caldwell, chair; Dr. W. C. Jackson, chancellor of the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina; S. C. Ray; Miss Mabel Straughan, sister of the church librarian; and Mrs. B. Latcher Webster, gathered to receive a long train of articles to be preserved: a Bible from Mrs. Nettie Hoge, one time church hostess and now senior Bible teacher; the church roll from clerk Vander Liles; the church history presented by Chancellor Jackson. Chairman of the building committee J. D. Wilkins offered a collection of documents outlining the building program, and finance committee chairman William M. York presented minutes from the Piedmont Baptist Association. A list of church officers was given by deacon chairman Gay Hensley. Not surprisingly there were sermons to be

# THE *First Baptist News*

GREENSBORO NORTH CAROLINA

Claud B. Bowen, Pastor      Sunday, September 2, 1951      S. C. Ray, Educational Director

## PASTOR BEGINS FOURTH YEAR



Dr. Bowen begins today his fourth year as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Greensboro.

Words cannot adequately express what he has meant to this church and to individual members of the church.

Our pastor believes in and preaches from the Bible. He knows the Lord and wants others to know Him.

He loves people and is desirous of serving them in any way he possibly can.

He is leading us in a great building program. His interest and zeal for all types of missionary endeavor is evident at all times.

Pastor, we're glad you are our pastor. We're ready for another challenging year.

Dr. Bowen is pictured here standing near where the pulpit will be in the new church building.

DR. CLAUD B. BOWEN

The church bulletin of September 2, 1951, recognized Dr. Bowen's fourth anniversary as pastor with the photograph showing where the pulpit would be placed once work on the church was complete.

preserved: A. A. Chandler, who had served on the pulpit committee in 1910 that called Clyde Turner, placed one of Dr. Turner's sermons in the box, followed by Carol Bowen, who represented the children of the Sunday School and offered one of her father's sermons. S. C. Ray came forward with a copy of the church covenant while Mrs. C. G. Freeman, president of the WMU,



Dr. Turner lays mortar on the cornerstone, October 10, 1951. Standing beside Dr. Bowen is architect A. C. Woodroof.

brought a copy of the *Biblical Recorder*. On behalf of the church's trustees, W. L. Carter gave a copy of the North Carolina Baptist Children's Homes *Charity and Children*. With copies of Greensboro newspapers presented by James Troxler, president of the Youth Council, the box was secured and the mortar laid. After a male quartet sang "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," the ceremony concluded with Dr. Bowen pronouncing a benediction. The next time the congregation gathered at the Madison Avenue site, it would be on a Sunday morning to worship in the completed church.

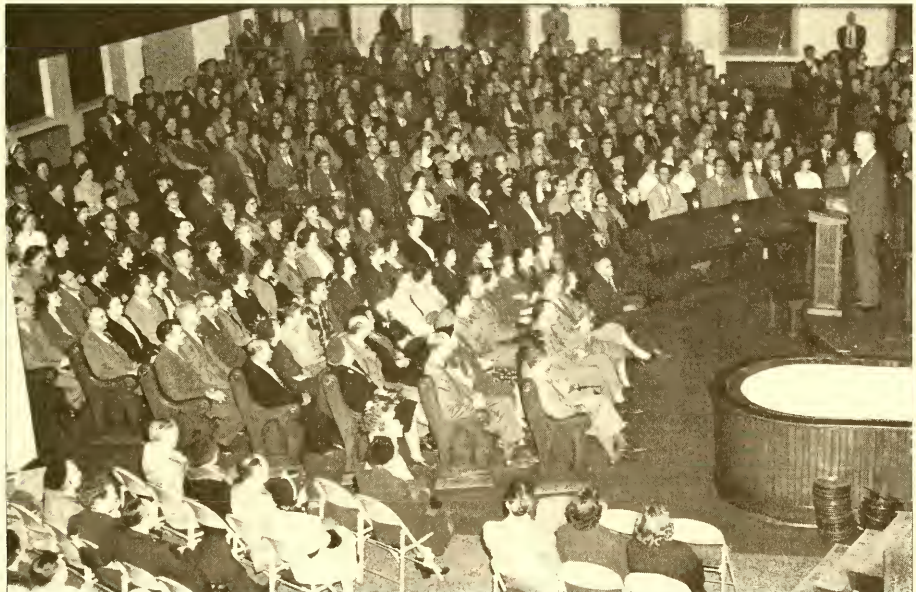
Meanwhile much work was being done to prepare the congregation for its new home. Under the rubric ADVANCE, a program of spiritual growth and development, leadership training, and kingdom work was implemented, with book studies and visitation programs developed. As part of the continued emphasis on foreign missions, Miss Inabelle G. Coleman, who had served as youth leader for the church from 1926 to 1933, returned to describe her work overseas with the lecture "Christ Lives and Suffers in China Today." A year later the citywide Billy Graham revival of October 14–November 11, 1951, broke church attendance and giving records. The church's Sunday School set a new high attendance mark with 1,381 individuals present on December 2 and, during the previous weeks of revival, 103 persons had been received into the church, sixty-three of whom came by baptism. Bill York reported to deacons that the crusade had balanced a growing shortfall in the church's budget and made the latest annual canvass the easiest the church had ever known. Shortly afterward, on the evenings of January 21–24, 1952, J. Clyde Turner returned to the old church on

West Market Street to lead a study in his book *The New Testament Doctrine of the Church*. Dr. Bowen concluded that attendance, which averaged 415 for the four evenings Turner taught, was the largest he had ever seen for a study course.

During this flurry of activity, one construction project was completed: on Friday, November 30, 1951, the Bowen family hosted an open house at the new parsonage at 203 West Greenway, North.

Two more specific preparations for moving into the new church were also undertaken. The first regarded the building itself: J. D. Wilkins requested on behalf of the building committee that some of the work which had been eliminated from the original proposal as a way of keeping escalating costs in check—tile flooring and painting of classroom walls, for example—be restored. The committee further recommended that air-conditioning be installed in the auditorium, chapel, and offices (but not the educational building) and that the parking area be paved. The recommendation, which was accepted by the congregation, added \$120,000 to the cost of the new building.

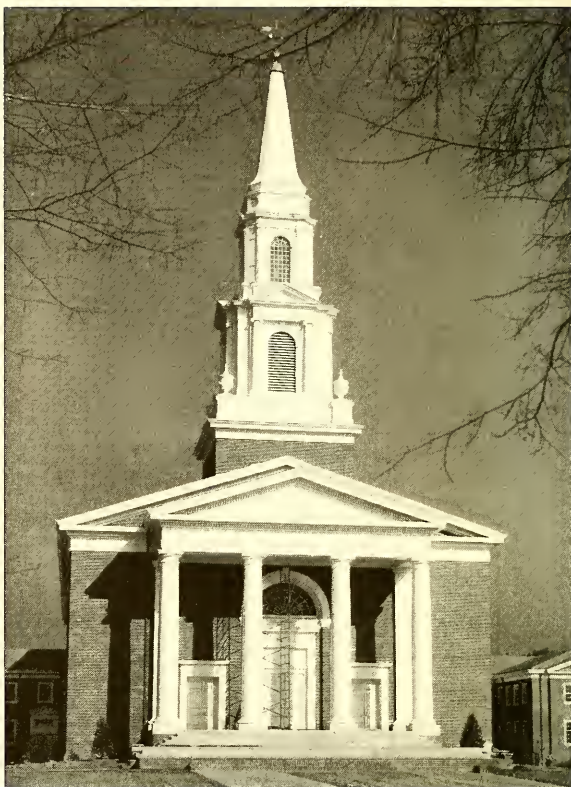
The second preparation generated more controversy but was also finally accepted, albeit hesitantly by some in the congregation, and would change the complexion of the adult Sunday School. S. C. Ray invited Dr. W. L. Howse of Fort Worth, Texas (where he worked as a professor of religious education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and the religious education direc-



A capacity crowd gathered in the West Market Street church's first floor auditorium in January 1952 to hear Dr. Turner teach from his book, *New Testament Doctrine*.

tor for W. A. Criswell's church) to lead in a study of his book, *The True Functions of the Sunday School*. In his book Howse emphasized the importance of a graded adult Sunday School—that is, a Sunday School in which small classes were organized by age instead of growing over time without restriction into huge classes of dozens and sometimes hundreds of learners.

Ray wanted First Baptist's Sunday School organized according to the principle espoused by Howse, especially in light of the fact that the new building had been configured for small-group classroom space. Even though deacons approved of his plans, Ray also had to convince Sunday School



The façade of the new church is pictured in November 1952.

members. He had first to overcome any confusion about what graded Sunday School meant, as evidenced by one member who informed Ray, "I don't think adults are going to like being graded on their Sunday School lessons." More serious was the concern many felt about breaking up longstanding classes. Years later Ray recalled that he "about jumped up and hollered" when one of the most vocal critics of the plan spoke out in a final meeting in the old church auditorium the Sunday before the move into the new church, declaring that although he preferred keeping his old class, he would stand by what the church wanted. All new classes would be organized, with new teachers recruited and asked not to divulge which groups they would be teaching in order to discourage interference from old loyalties. By now it was becoming apparent that growing numbers of members could answer affirmatively the oft-repeated question of the day, "The Building Will Be Ready for Us. Will You Be Ready for the Building?"

Construction on the new church rapidly neared completion. The move into the building would occur on Sunday, November 30, 1952. Preparations were



The kind of Sunday School class envisioned by S. C. Ray for the new church: small and age-graded. Ray remembered in a 2002 interview that he “about jumped up and hollered” when a teacher of one of the largest men’s classes and an outspoken critic of the plan to restructure the Sunday School publicly announced that he would follow the will of the majority and make the change. (*Undated photograph, ca. 1952*)

made for three days of special services and a Friday evening youth banquet. Not surprisingly, J. Clyde Turner was once again called upon to preach at the Sunday morning service. But he would not be the only former pastor to return—one other was still alive. In October Dr. Bowen received a letter from Dr. William Carey Newton, living in retirement in Richmond, Virginia, accepting the invitation to be present at the opening. “Today I am celebrating my seventy-ninth birthday and the fiftieth of my appointment as missionary,” Newton wrote. “I began my pastorate in Washington Street Church, January 1, 1901 and completed it December, 1902. At the last business meeting at which I presided the name was changed to First Baptist Church.”

The main doors of the new sanctuary were opened on Sunday afternoon, November 23, 1952, as a time for the congregation to get acquainted with the building. There were guides posted throughout the building and during the next year fact sheets were prepared to describe the facilities. Members could learn, for example, that the church sat on a property of nearly eight and a half acres composed of the original 1937 purchase and a smaller parcel of land to the west that was donated by two members. The main sanctuary, including the choir, seated eighteen hundred people; the chapel, including anterooms, approximately 275. There were twenty-two assembly rooms for all Sunday School departments, with classroom facilities for approximately two thousands people. Special rooms with private entrances and separate bathroom facilities were dedicated for use by Girl and Boy Scouts. The library had shelving to accom-

moderate fifty-eight hundred volumes. The sanctuary was equipped with a three-manual pipe organ manufactured by Austin Organs, Inc., of Hartford, Connecticut, while Schulmerich electronic bells had been installed in the steeple. A parlor furnished by the church's Woman's Missionary Union was dedicated to Bertha May Hicks Turner. The paved parking area west and north of the building had



A grinning S. C. Ray sets out chairs in a children's new Sunday school classroom. (*Undated photograph, ca. 1952*)

space for two hundred automobiles. It all seemed spacious enough although no one foresaw how quickly the church would fill all the new space and soon demand more.

The Thanksgiving service on the morning of Thursday, November 27, 1952, was one of tremendous yet mixed emotions. This was the last service First Baptist would hold in the West Market Street church. Many in the congregation knew no other church building; by now nearly two generations of believers had marked the most significant events of their lives in the building that had been so spacious and finely outfitted when it opened its doors in 1906. Now, as sunlight streamed into the sanctuary, some must have looked up at the Robert W. Vernon memorial window—installed in the Washington Street church in 1899 and later moved to West Market Street—with sadness at the realization that it would remain behind, having been deemed unsuitable for the Colonial Revival style of the new church. Small wonder that one of the verses printed in the day's order of service was Isaiah 41:13: "For the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, 'Fear not, I will help thee.'" Excerpts from Dr. Rowe's history were included in the bulletin to describe how the West Market Street church had come to be. But the promise of new opportunities for service kept the morning from becoming maudlin as the congregation read Psalm 103: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

Crowds gathered early on Sunday morning, November 30, 1952. By the time of worship at 11:00 a.m., the sanctuary was filled, as were the chapel and the first floor auditorium, with approximately three thousand people linked by loudspeakers. The congregation read responsively with Dr. Ray from Psalm 98: "O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvelous things," and sang, just

as it had at the groundbreaking ceremony two years earlier, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." Attention soon focused on J. Clyde Turner, described by a newspaper reporter as "white haired and elderly, but speaking in a strong and resonant voice," as he came to the pulpit to preach a sermon on the text from Mark 11:17: "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer?'" In the same way that Jesus recognized the temple as the dwelling place of God, so, too, Turner said, did the congregation that had built the new church:

In like manner, this building which you have erected here is the Lord's house. It is the Lord's house in that you have erected it for the worship of the Lord. It is the Lord's house in that you have built it for the glory of the Lord. It is the Lord's house in that you will dedicate it to the Lord. It is the Lord's house in that it is a place where the Lord has promised to meet with his people. If we had eyes to see we would behold the living Lord standing here as he stood in the temple of old; and if we had ears to hear, we would hear his voice saying, "My house."



Congregants leave church on Easter Sunday, April 5, 1953.

Turner voiced his concern, however, lest the church forget its mission. "I need not remind you that the blessings and privileges which you will enjoy in this place are not to be held in selfish hands, but are to be shared with the world. . . . This church is ever to be a missionary church, sharing its blessing with the whole world." He reflected on the struggles of previous generations of Baptist believers and compared them with the present generation:

We have come a long way from that little building on South Elm Street, where a little band of humble souls met to worship God three quarters of a century ago. But I wonder if we in this day can match their courage and devotion. It will mean little for the cause of Christ if we erect a great building, and fail to build a great church. And we can build a great church only as we build great lives, and we can build great lives, only as we build for Christ.

In closing Dr. Turner left his prepared text to speak more personally to the congregation. "We stand today in a challenge hour. We can go forward or we can go backward. I love this church. My prayer is that this church, with unbroken ranks, may step forward with your pastor and carry on the work of God."

The Sunday services (Dr. Bowen led the evening service) began a week of activity for First Baptist which featured a series of speakers at the church. Southern Seminary president Dr. Duke K. McCall led off the series on Monday evening, challenging church members to "bring in people to hear the gospel." Miss Alma Hunt, executive secretary of the WMU for the Southern Baptist Convention, spoke at a luncheon on Tuesday. That evening, Dr. C. Oscar Johnson, pastor of Third Baptist Church of St. Louis, Missouri, told the congregation, "We owe to generations to come a debt, so we build. We build also because we believe this building, somehow, stands as the answer to the confusion of the day." Representing the Foreign Mission Board, Dr. Baker James Cauthen warned on Wednesday that communism had brought "a reign of terror such as China had never known before" and that a communist victory in America would result in the beautiful new church's becoming nothing more than "a sounding board for Communist propaganda." Young people were the primary audience for Friday's speaker, Rev. James Langley, student and chaplain for Baptist students at Princeton University. According to Langley, "We accept the doctrines, but deny the reality of our Lord" by failing to comprehend the reality of Christ at work in human lives today. Following Langley's remarks, the youth performed a play they had written, *Dreams to Deeds*, that traced the history of the church.

All in all it must have been an exhausting week. For that first day Sunday



School attendance was 1,807 persons, "all in one building!" Twenty-six new classes had been organized, and Training Union reported another 339 people in attendance. On Monday, December 8, 1952, deacons held their first meeting in the new church. The following Sunday afternoon, the church hosted an open house for the public. On the third Wednesday in January 1953, the first "church night" was held, designated as a time when committees and church organizations such as Sunday School classes could conduct a monthly meeting over a cafeteria-style supper costing fifty cents a plate. There were eleven simultaneous meetings that first night. Being in the new facility must have been made even more satisfying with the announcement in March that architect Albert C. Woodroof's design won second place in the Church Architectural Guild's competition for best planned religious education buildings. The church could look forward to balmy days of growth and prosperity, but the same years that brought such blessings also generated expansion of newer suburbs with their concomitant demand for their own neighborhood churches. And the tremendous economic expansion of the period further fostered social and recreational distractions that would eventually begin to pull church members in different and sometimes competing directions.

# 9

## Will Our Church Advance?

*Question posed in the church bulletin, October 16, 1955*

On Saturday, July 16, 1955, the church sponsored a Teenage Roadeo for adolescents between the ages of sixteen and nineteen who were members of the church or one of its organizations. “We feel that the proper handling of an automobile in order to insure the safety of the occupants of the car and others on the road is part of a Christian’s duty,” the bulletin opined. “Therefore, this ‘roadeo’ is being offered as a definite part of our summer youth program at the church.” Drivers would be prepared for a written examination and automobiles provided for road tests and practice in straight line and serpentine driving, smooth stopping, and parallel parking. The Saturday activity would end with the awarding of trophies and a barbecue supper.

The decade of the fifties marked an important era for churches like First Baptist in which participation in church activities reached all-time highs as the church kept a lookout for ways to compete in a culture that was offering an ever-growing number of distractions. As the church tried new ways of outreach and fellowship with programs like the “roadeo,” it was also mindful of being deeply rooted in the past, which could sometimes make for striking contrasts. After a career as church organizer that stretched back to 1929, for example, Mrs. Margaret Banks



The church sponsored a “Roadeo” on June 16, 1955.

retired on April 26, 1953. In one of the tribute letters given to Dr. Turner in 1948, Mrs. Banks remembered the spiritual experience of being baptized on a Sunday evening by Turner. In 1930, as the seriousness of the Depression became apparent, Banks was one of the church employees whose salaries were cut as a way of curbing expenditures. Now, in writing a thank-you note to the deacons for the silver tray that had been presented to her, Banks declared "My twenty years of service to our church has, from my viewpoint, been as nearly perfect as a human relationship of its kind could possibly be."

Mrs. Nettie Hoge was also leaving her work as Sunday School teacher. At eighty-four, Hoge, who had also served as church hostess in earlier years, said that the only reason she was resigning was because of her age. She was recognized for sixty-eight years of teaching, having served First Baptist's Fidelis Class since 1925. Education director S. C. Ray presented her with a dozen yellow chrysanthemums on Wednesday evening, November 13, 1953, saying in tribute, "She is loved, admired, and respected. She is a woman of conviction and has the courage to speak and to live her convictions."

With the rich legacy of its past, First Baptist was uniquely positioned to move into the future. Unlike its experience of fifty years earlier, when the building on West Market Street had left the church hobbled with indebtedness, the congregation on Madison Avenue soon paid its loans and prepared to dedicate its new church on January 1, 1956, just a little over three years after moving into it. More than two thousand people attended that Sunday morning service when Judge William M. York, chairman of the building fund, presented to the pastor the cancelled mortgage signifying a church free of a \$1,300,000 debt. Dr. Bowen accepted the cancelled mortgage and the deed of trust, and Dr. Turner preached the dedicatory sermon.

For these Greensboro Baptists, Turner said, the building of the church on Madison Avenue was like the construction of the temple during the reign of Solomon—with music, sermon, and prayer, with God's acceptance of the building, and with the response of the people in humility, praise, and sacrifice. The church, however, could not rest content, as Turner challenged the congregation saying, "What profit to dedicate a building to God if we do not dedicate ourselves to God?" The numbers who came forward at the end of the service for dedication, baptism, and membership were one response to Turner's call; so, too, was the announcement by Judge York that the building fund had a surplus of \$8,164.50, which the congregation would use toward further improvements of the facility. With the hymn "Faith of Our Fathers, Living Still," the congregation could once again witness the church's three pastors of the twentieth century standing together: Drs. Bowen, Turner, and William Carey Newton.

With younger men like Bowen and Ray, the staff and lay leaders were also looking to new directions for the church to pursue and in ways other than teenage driving lessons. At the height of the Cold War, for example, the bulletin of February 20, 1955, featured a sketch of a mushroom cloud with the announcement, "Atomic Scientist to Speak to Men." Dr. Turner had started a men's fellowship group in 1938 that fell off during the war years; S. C. Ray had revived the group shortly after he arrived. The atomic scientist who would be visiting on the evening of March 4, 1955, was Dr. Ralph Overman, Chairman of the Special Training Division of the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies. A thirty-five-year-old chemist, Overman's specialty was nuclear medicine; he also was an active member of First Baptist Church of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and, in later years, the author of *Who Am I? The Faith of a Scientist*. Faith and science in the nuclear age—here was a vehicle for keeping men involved in the church and, by encouraging them to get extra tickets for friends, participating in a ministry of outreach.

Nonetheless, a men's fellowship group would not be enough to sustain the church; something that involved the entire congregation was needed to continue the sense of purpose that had made possible the facility on Madison Avenue. As a beginning step, a plan for a modern committee structure was implemented by deacons in a special meeting in August 1955 that organized, defined terms of office, and detailed duties for three dozen church officers and committees, with a committee on committees to provide oversight. In addition to long-standing committees such as finance and personnel, newer groups such as the audiovisual and radio and television committees pointed to more recent interests. "Junior Service Men" of a few years earlier was recast as "Junior Deacons," carrying out an idea first proposed by Dr. Turner in the 1930s and reflecting a desire to inculcate leadership among the growing numbers of young men joining the church. But, the advancement committee was attracting considerably more attention because of its responsibility to direct projects coming out of a new initiative.

The bulletin of October 16, 1955, asked the question, "Will our church advance?" The previous spring, an Enlargement and Advancement Program had been established upon the recommendation of the finance committee, with committee chairman Bill York stating as its goal raising enough money to retire the remaining indebtedness on the new building (approximately sixty-five thousand dollars) by Christmas. As it became increasingly clear that this goal would be reached, new projects began to appear: air-conditioning the infant care rooms, improving sanctuary acoustics, converting the space under the narthex into additional nursery space, expanding parking and providing recreational

space to the west of the current parking lot, projects that met with the congregation's approval at the church's dedication service on January 1, 1956.

The church would also use the Advancement Program to return to its work of sponsoring mission churches in Greensboro. When Claud Bowen came to Greensboro in 1948, the Lindley Park Mission at the western edge of town had already taken off, requiring only modest assistance from First Baptist. By February 1949, Dr. Bowen was congratulating the Lindley Park congregation for conducting its first service in its new chapel (although the building would not be fully completed until 1958, thanks in part to what the Lindley Park pastor termed "the wonderful gift" of three thousand dollars from First Baptist). But if First Baptist's involvement in Lindley Park was minimal, two new missions located in the city's growing suburbs would be different.

In July 1956, Judge York's "detailed, inspiring report" from the advancement committee was incorporated into a twelve-point recommendation to the congregation detailing the organizing, financing, building, and sponsoring of Lawndale Baptist Church, to be located near the recently opened James Y. Joyner Elementary School (named after the same Joyner who had been a deacon at the church and professor at the State Normal and Industrial Institute early in the century before moving to Raleigh as state superintendent of public instruction). A suitable parcel of land on the west side of Lawndale Drive north of the Sears Mail Order House was secured for \$25,000. It was comfortably located in a neighborhood of 876 homes, according to a church survey, with 126 families having one or more members who were Baptist and a high percentage of individuals expressing an interest in joining a new church. A chapel could be built for \$125,000; until then arrangements were made for the Lawndale congregation to gather on Sunday mornings in Joyner Elementary.

By the time the newly organized Lawndale church first gathered in the school for an organizational meeting on September 2, 1956 (Dr. Bowen's eighth anniversary in Greensboro), volunteers who would help serve the organizations of the new church had been recruited at First Baptist. Attendance at the following Sunday morning worship was considered good, and a week later pastor Bill Wilson, who had been dispatched by First Baptist for this work, reported attendance of 154 with sixty-three at evening worship. Eleven new members were added at the church's first Sunday service.

The only thing better than sponsoring one mission was sponsoring two, which the church did on Wednesday evening, October 10, 1956, when it adopted a resolution from the advancement committee to establish a branch in the Hunter Hills subdivision south of Patterson Street, west of Merritt Drive, and north of the route Interstate 40 would soon take. Although services began

in Hunter Elementary School the next month, with Southeastern Seminary student W. D. Fox acting as pastor (under the direction of Dr. Bowen), it was with the understanding that First Baptist would not initiate a building program there until the cost of constructing the Lawndale church had been paid. With a down payment of \$3,000 coming from the Piedmont Baptist Association, a three-and-a-half-acre lot on Pomona Road was purchased for \$11,400. When the Hunter Hills congregation first met on Sunday afternoon, November 4, 1956, twenty-four new members joined.

By 1957, First Baptist was involved in a variety of "Advancement" activities. Groundbreaking at Lawndale was held on February 3, 1957. Sunday School attendance at the two mission churches grew quickly: 160 at Hunter Hills and 215 at Lawndale reported on March 24. That spring such work was furthered when Bill York presented and the deacons accepted a certificate of adoption for "The Wilbur Lee Carter Charitable Trust," which created a fund based on one thousand shares in the Southern Life Insurance Company (where Carter had served



A groundbreaking was celebrated at the Lawndale Baptist Mission, February 3, 1957. Standing between Bill York (with shovel) and S. C. Ray to the right is Lawndale pastor Bill Wilson.

as president), the dividends from which would be paid annually to the Advancement Fund for Baptist missions in Guilford County making this a significant source of funding in future years from a member who had been a long-serving member of the church's building committee. The summer of 1957 saw the Lawndale congregation ready to move into its new building on July 7; at the end of December, the church was officially constituted, with 176 of its members coming from First Baptist. That Lawndale Baptist Church quickly emerged as a leading contributor to mission causes was evidenced by statistics released by the Baptist State Convention in February 1960 showing that the church's gifts ranked third among the fifty-six churches of the Piedmont Baptist Association.

Now attention would shift to the Hunter Hills Mission but not before First Baptist recognized in July 1956 the loss of one of its own members who had worked alongside Dr. Turner since 1910: seventy-five-year-old James Drewry Wilkins, who died on July 22. Chairman of the personnel committee for thirty years, then chairman of the building committee, J. D. Wilkins had been at the center of church projects ranging from *The Connecting Link* newsletter of the First World War to the patient (and sometimes impatient) work that led to the construction of a new church in the years after the Second World War. At his funeral Dr. Turner captured something of Wilkins's character with a text from Romans 12:11: "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

There was also cause for celebration that year, as the church recognized Claud Bowen's eight years of service and achievement in Greensboro in September 1956. "In the eight short but happy years our Pastor has been with us, he has not only endeared himself in our hearts," read a deacon report prepared in October for the occasion, "but he has been recognized as one of our great outstanding leaders of the Baptist denomination." Bowen had served, for example, on the committee of the Southern Baptist Convention that had selected the town of Wake Forest as the site of Southeastern Seminary, where he now served as a trustee. He had also been a trustee for four years at Wake Forest College, which had moved to a new campus in Winston-Salem at the time First Baptist moved to its facility on Madison Avenue. North Carolina Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem and Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital in Greensboro also counted him as a trustee. The previous month, Bowen had preached the sermon on the observation of the centennial of the opening of Mars Hill College, and he would soon represent Southwestern College of Memphis, Tennessee, at the dedication of the new Wake Forest College campus. The following November, Bowen preached the annual sermon at the state Baptist convention.

The modern church that Dr. Bowen pastored needed modern ways to communicate with its membership. Educational director Ray had recommended as early as 1950 that the weekly church bulletin be mailed to the membership (although it would be many years more before this was done), and in 1954 the bulletin began to list birthdays, which Dr. Bowen noted were worth adding to devotional time. Communication speedier than the mails was also taken up by the deacons when they approved the radio committee's arrangement with local station WCOG to broadcast Sunday morning services live for the first six months of 1954 at a cost of eight hundred dollars, paid for, committee chairman Ed Gregg informed the body, by three anonymous donors. The church even entered the television age at the end of 1955 and the beginning of 1956 through a short-lived series of broadcasts via WUNC and WFMY.

The television that broadcast First Baptist to the broader community also brought the world to First Baptist, sometimes in images that disturbed the status quo. With the burgeoning civil rights movements, Southern Baptist churches were confronted with a legacy of racism that sometimes confounded congregations accommodating themselves to changing times. Deacons as early as 1953 considered how to seat "negroes" at church services. In the spring of 1956, they adopted a policy on what to do if "colored visitors" attended services: they should be seated, and if any of them presented themselves for membership, the pastor would state that all acceptable candidates would be "referred to a personal conference and voted on at a later date." (Left unclear is if this policy was ever implemented. However, deacons agreed in 1957 that "Negro Ministers" could be invited to participate in the long-standing monthly meeting of Baptist pastors held at the church.) Even as the church's young people participated in a Woman's Missionary Union essay contest on the topic, "The Evils of Alcohol," it was apparent that other ugly realities such as racism were to be confronted in modern society, as the decade of the sixties would soon demonstrate.

With the Lawndale project now completed and the money borrowed repaid, the congregation was ready on February 9, 1958, to approve a resolution calling for the building and financing of a church for the Hunter Hills fellowship. A facility similar to Lawndale's would be constructed with the Hunter Hills congregation assuming responsibility for paying half of the estimated ninety-five thousand dollars the advancement committee expected to borrow (the project eventually costing slightly less, at \$90,742.82). Work proceeded apace, with groundbreaking on February 16, the building ready for use by August, and the congregation constituted as an independent Baptist church on the last Sunday in December 1958, with its roll containing the names of 127 members who transferred from First Baptist.

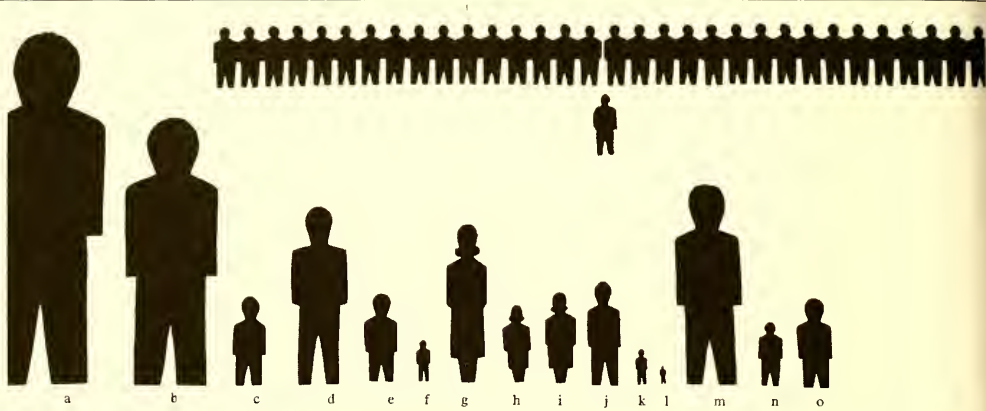


The year was a busy one for church missions. As the Hunter Hills resolution was being approved by the First Baptist congregation, an older daughter church, Asheboro Street Baptist, was celebrating the completion of a new church for one of her missions, Parkway Baptist, located on Benjamin Parkway, another of the city's recent connectors. Meanwhile a search by First Baptist's mission committee for a suitable location to establish a new church on Friendly Road between Buffalo Creek and Guilford College resulted in a proposal in June 1958 to purchase approximately six acres at the northwest intersection of Friendly Avenue and Westridge Road—the estate of Mrs. Pearl T. Crutchfield with its two dwellings and a barn—for sixty-five thousand dollars.

No sooner had the congregation approved this proposal than, in July 1958, it adopted a Four-Point Local Improvement Plan that would meliorate the sanctuary's sound system, complete and enlarge the organ, install air-conditioning in the educational building, and recondition the youth's recreation room. The next month, a committee of twelve was commissioned to study all aspects of the youth program, including the possibility of erecting an activities building.

The church's vitality was unmatched by any other period in its hundred-year history. Membership was at 3,804 in 1958. Average Sunday School attendance peaked that same year at 1,652. Financial giving had made possible several church missions. The leadership of Dr. Bowen in the denomination was increasingly recognized as the pastor traveled around the world to preach the gospel (as in 1959, for example, when he visited Ghana and Nigeria). The church bulletin for November 23, 1958, illustrated the panoply of church activities in which members participated: Operation VEM (Visit Every Member) was in full swing, while the Annual "M" (Mobilization) Night for Training Union would bring to town Charles Howard of Campbell College, a popular speaker and regular visitor. A workshop for ushers progressed across four consecutive Sunday evenings and was considered important because "ushers add much to the dignity and reverence of a service." Dr. O. T. Brinkley, dean of faculty and professor of Christian sociology and ethics at Southeastern Seminary, was the guest speaker at a nursery workers' appreciation dinner. At the dinner sixty volunteers were told that "the Nursery workers perform a valuable service and do some of the most important teaching done in our church." With the theme "Know Your Junior," the Men's Fellowship and Junior 2 groups held a Parents' Night, while recruitment began for the church's junior and young men's basketball teams. "All our church members are asked to share in this phase of our young people's program with their interest and support," the bulletin said. "Hope to see you at the games!"

As in any period there were times when a sense of loss was felt, as when Miss Inabelle Graves Coleman, whose connection to the church stretched back to



Because of a number of requests we are presenting here in graphic form information which was presented at the recent Church Leadership Dinner. The figures in the picture are drawn to scale representing the statistics below:

|  |      |   |      |
|--|------|---|------|
| a. Total church membership               | 3738 | j. Average attendance at morning worship service (for 36 Sundays) | 1091 |
| b. Resident membership                   | 2789 | k. Average attendance at evening worship service                  | 393  |
| c. Non-resident membership               | 949  | l. Average attendance at prayer meeting                           | 200  |
| d. Church members in Sunday School       | 1952 | m. Pledgers to budget or regular givers                           | 2184 |
| e. Church members not in Sunday School   | 837  | n. No record of any giving  | 605  |
| f. Church members in Training Union      | 453  | o. Tithers  | 795  |
| g. Female church members                 | 1645 |   |      |
| h. Female church members in W. M. U.     | 727  |   |      |
| i. Female church members not in W. M. U. | 848  |   |      |

The long line of figures across the top with the single figure underneath represents the 32 persons it took to win one person to Christ during the past year in our church.

This graph shows composition of church's membership from the bulletin for October 29, 1959.

the days soon after her graduation from college in 1918 through her last years as a convention missionary in Taiwan, died in October 1959. But, there were also new faces at the church: Randall Lolley, who would later return to the church as pastor, spent eighteen months as First Baptist's assistant pastor in 1958-59. And the future promised to be just as hopeful, as the church looked forward in May 1960 to establishing a new mission at Central Junior High School on Spring Street for the "many people in the 'downtown' area of our city who are not being reached by any church or mission." At the same time the church dedicated its recently refitted organ, now augmented with four stops consisting of 556 pipes. First Baptist was indeed advancing in every way that the congregation had defined the concept. In short, the church occupied an enviable position for celebrating its centennial.

J. Clyde Turner had been around long enough to remember that in 1926 Walter W. Rowe had written a church history. On at least two occasions since then, deacons had talked about having the history updated, and by 1956 Turner at their urging had written a new one but one without much mention of him. Material for an additional chapter was collected; and, at the end of 1958, when the church announced plans for celebrating its centennial the next year, Turner's *A Century of Service* was readied for publication. The month of March was des-

ignated for the centennial celebration, with Turner returning to the church to preach. The church was filled to capacity on Sunday morning, March 8, 1959, with congregants wearing name tags that featured a photograph of the church as it was when they had joined together with the date of their joining.

Turner preached a message at the centennial observance on March 8, 1959, that must have been familiar to those who had heard him at the groundbreaking ceremony in 1950, the first service in the new church in 1952, or the dedication service in 1956, with a text from 1 Samuel 7:12: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Turner challenged his listeners: "The same spirit which stirred the hearts and minds of that small band must stir the hearts of this church today." The perseverance of those early members had made possible the church which the congregation now enjoyed. "What has brought it about?" Turner asked. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. God didn't do it all, however. He helped us. It is still true today. God expects people to help themselves." With God, "no enemy can bring us down to defeat." Complacency could bring defeat, however, especially in a time of prosperity when too often people forgot the main purpose of the church. "God is calling on all of us today to dedicate our lives to help carry on His work here on earth. May that be our spirit today."

That evening a reception was held in honor of Dr. and Mrs. Turner and Dr. and Mrs. Bowen (Dr. and Mrs. W. Carey Newton being unable to attend because of illness). Mrs. Haskell Allen prepared a stupendous cake for the occasion, and, because so many asked about the ingredients, the church bulletin



The church's centennial cake is flanked by Dr. and Mrs. Turner (l.) and Dr. and Mrs. Bowen (r.), March 8, 1959.

listed what it took to make: sixty-two dozen eggs, one hundred pounds of butter, ninety pounds of flour, one hundred pounds of granulated sugar and fifty pounds of powdered sugar for the frosting, six quarts of whipping cream, and one quart vanilla flavoring! The three-hundred pound cake had four tiers that were arranged and labeled from bottom to top in a manner that made their own theological statement: Baptism and Lord's Supper at the foundation, tithes and offerings above, activities supported by the bottom two layers and on top a Bible opened to reveal the centennial dates. With the Turners posed to one side and the Bowens on the other, a photograph of the cake was made available to church members as a souvenir of the occasion.

But there was more: the week's observance included a commemorative plate (available for \$1.50) and the production of S. C. Ray's historical pageant *Upon This Rock*, based on Turner's new book. The following week was one of prayer and visitation in preparation for the revival of March 30–April 5, 1959, led by Dr. H. Guy Moore of Broadway Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas. Finally, the church approved the finance committee's recommendation to allocate from funds accumulated through Sunday School offerings gifts to two seminaries in honor of Dr. Turner: \$1,000 to Southern Seminary library and \$1,996 to furnish the chapel at Southeastern Seminary. After what Turner had termed "a century of service," First Baptist Greensboro had reached full maturity. It was cognizant of the contributions of its past and willing to meet what it expected the future to offer, even if tomorrow presented challenges that could not have been anticipated.

On July 30, 1961, a church member and resident along Madison Avenue urged deacons to accept his petition calling upon the city not to change the name of the street that ran in front of the church from Madison to Friendly Avenue (linking it to the road that ran to Guilford College instead of the residential street with which the church had been associated). Deacons declined to act on the petition. If renaming a street distressed one individual, how much more unsettling would be the transformational attitude toward authority and tradition wrought by the new decade? Although First Baptist began its second century fully sharing in the optimism that characterized the early sixties, its congregation could not foresee how different an environment the church would know by the end of the decade.

The sixties began with the church involved in one of its favorite pursuits: building, both at home and in mission work. The final report of the committee of twelve, released on August 25, 1959, concluded that "while the ministry of our Church is now and must ever be primarily concerned with the spiritual welfare and growth of its members and those within its reach, it must nevertheless, in

order to perform this sacred responsibility, also minister to the other areas of life.” As there was a demonstrable need for additional educational space and an expanded “Christian activities program,” the committee recommended that a broadened program under the auspices of a full-time staff member be housed in a new facility that provided both educational and recreational space. The idea moved forward to the point that by June 1961, the building and grounds committee recommended the creation of a special building committee. “God will move us to go forward with these needs,” according to committee chairman Jake Wall, “if we will only open our hearts and minds to the urgency of additional space to carry on His work and to establish a specific program for not only the youth of our church, but for all members and particularly the unsaved souls in our community.”

Exactly what constituted “Christian activities” was yet to be worked out, but in August 1961 a survey described the need for a rearrangement of the nursery space that either a new Christian activities building or an expansion of the present educational building could be designed to meet. The original nursery, located in five rooms in the northeastern corner of the ground floor, was now supplemented by the three rooms that had been added under the front steps of the church a few years earlier and four additional rooms located in the chapel area on the second floor. What this meant in practical terms was made clear by the hypothetical experience of a family coming to Sunday School for the first time with three nursery-age children. After registering at the original nursery and leaving the one-year-old in that area, the two-year-old would have to be

taken through the first floor auditorium to the nursery under the front steps. If, however, the adult department that used the auditorium was already in session, the family would have to walk along the outside of the building and enter the front of the church or, if it was raining, come through the sanctuary where another Sunday School class was meeting. Finally, the three-



Children read in one of the church's classrooms, in photograph dated 1955. Before many years in its new building, the church was looking for ways to expand its children's space.

year-old could be left in the classroom near the chapel, concluding for the parents a walk of approximately seven hundred feet. (Never mind that only one of the nursery departments had a sink or that children did not like the rooms under the front steps because there were no windows!)

The other Sunday School departments were similarly evaluated: one room on the second floor had about seventy-five six-year-olds meeting in it while classes in the junior department (ages nine-twelve) had a teacher/pupil ratio twice the recommended size and a class in the intermediate department (ages thirteen-sixteen) allotted only five-square-feet per pupil. A new building would help ease crowding in the children's departments (adult departments were not so crowded) while also allowing for new things that had their own appeal: a combination gym and skating floor, for example, and craft and hobby rooms that would also cater to the interests of older adults.

"This program should not conflict with basic church philosophies and doctrines," Claud Bowen wrote the membership, as the deacons prepared a resolution calling for a building project that was estimated to cost approximately \$500,000. "It should have as its end the salvation of souls and the development of Christian character." Salvation of souls, however, was being approached differently than it had been in earlier generations. The Christian activities building "would help us know our young people better. It would give an opportunity for mature people to have fellowship in crafts and other activities. Families could enjoy together various games, skating, crafts, drama and creative activities. An activities building would help to co-ordinate our schedule on Wednesday and other days during the week." With the congregation's approval of the deacon resolution on November 5, 1961, the advancement committee was dissolved and a new building committee was put in its place to solicit pledges and to begin a new phase of construction at the church. By April 1962, the congregation could view a plot plan of the new facility as designed by architect A. C. Woodroof. The activities and recreation building would stand near an extension of the east wing of the education building which, taken together, would allow for an expansion of Sunday School membership by 25 percent. The two-story recreation building would include a regulation-size basketball court and, according to the dynamic Judge York of the building committee, cost an estimated \$596,000. The congregation approved the plans and authorized financing in a resolution adopted on June 17, 1962.

Not surprisingly, this project was accompanied by local missions activity, this time in two different undertakings. The first sprang forth from an advancement committee report in 1960 regarding the idea of establishing a "Central Baptist Mission" in downtown Greensboro, specifically the area surrounding

Central Junior High School. A Vacation Bible School was planned for June 1960 at the junior high school, marking the beginning of the mission. Property that included a house that could be renovated was soon located at 801 Morehead Avenue (now the corner of Fulton and Spring Garden Streets, several blocks east of UNCG), and, with money donated for this purpose, a recommendation to purchase the property was approved by the congregation in April 1962. The building committee quickly proposed erecting a concrete-block building that would accommodate 150 people with six classrooms of 150 square feet each, and the following summer a resolution to spend \$14,000 on the building was approved by the congregation with building committee chairman U. A. Hedrick granted permission by deacons to remove from the church attic the old lectern for use at the chapel. Dale O. Smith was called to be the church's activity director and mission pastor, with Willis Lowe serving as Sunday School superintendent. On Sunday, October 7, 1962, Central Baptist Chapel was dedicated, marking First Baptist's first foray into missions work in a declining urban setting where a significant number of families were described as "broken."

Even more ambitious plans were being laid for the property on the corner of Friendly Avenue and Westridge Road. The same resolution that called for the allocation of funds to the Sunday School and Activities Building and Central Chapel also proposed that the corner lot on the city's western edge be offered to Asheboro Street Baptist Church as a site on which it could build a new church for its congregation. Members of Parkway Baptist had expressed an interest in starting another new church in the area in 1960, and now the advancement committee proposed that the site be given to the Asheboro Street congregation on condition that within two years a new church, consisting of a sanctuary seating at least six hundred people and an educational building, be erected on the site. Soon after the First Baptist congregation authorized the transfer of property, the Asheboro Street church accepted the offer, and at their meeting on January 2, 1962, deacons read a note of thanks from Asheboro Street pastor A. Leroy Parker, who said, "We will do our best to fulfill the dream you had for the lot; the establishment of a missionary Baptist church that will bring glory to our Lord." A year later, on March 27, 1963, Judge York reported to the deacons that the Asheboro Street church had complied with the stipulations set forth in the agreement and was about to let out construction contracts.

During these years the congregation witnessed both the losses from an older generation and the promise of a younger. Bertha Hicks Turner died on November 5, 1962, and early the next year, J. Clyde Turner wrote to ask his "wonderful Greensboro friends" how he could ever thank them for their un-failing kindness during the previous weeks. Dr. Bowen spoke at her funeral, and

the church sent a blanket of red roses for her casket. Another link to the past was broken when the nonagenarian William Carey Newton, who had pastored the church at the beginning of the century, died in Richmond on December 24, 1966.

Love gifts were taken for two members of the staff. One was retiring after many years of service: Mrs. Ethel Lee had come to Greensboro when her husband O. E. Lee was called to be educational director in 1921 and had served since 1942 as church hostess; at the time of her retirement in 1963, she was the longest serving member of the staff. And a much newer member of the staff, Clara Brincefield, youth director since 1961, was also leaving in 1963, first for training in Costa Rica and then to accept an appointment as missionary to Chile. The church's WMU was treated to color slides and a message from Costa Rica taped by Brincefield at the beginning of 1964; a year later she was on the ground in Temuco, Chile, where she parented one of the girls' dormitories and taught English and Bible at the nine-hundred-student Baptist school.

If foreign missions work was now understood to include areas in the Western hemisphere as well as China and Africa, so, too, was the need to rethink membership in the home church. By the early years of the decade, a white congregation in the South could no longer avoid confronting the issue of racial segregation. Already deacons at their meeting on February 8, 1960—only days after four students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College had begun the sit-in movement at the F. W. Woolworth store on South Elm Street—discussed how to handle the presence of “Negroes” at the state WMU convention to be held at the church in March. Best left to the WMU to decide was the general opinion.

The question returned full-bore, however, in the spring of 1963, when Dr. Bowen reviewed with deacons on May 13 the procedure to be followed should blacks attend a service or come to the front during an invitation. His concern was clear from the minutes of the meeting in which the word “demonstrators” is stricken. Apparently, the fear was not so much that a black might sincerely desire to join the membership as it was that the church might become a scene of protest. That a person of color might genuinely and simply want to attend did not appear to enter into anyone's thinking, as was soon evident. The next month, Bowen, using one of his favorite catch phrases, appealed for “a greater loyalty to the church” in handling racial matters and urged stronger attendance Sunday and Wednesday nights, solidness of faith, and a renewal of fellowship and visitation. “Let the church be a lighthouse for faith and security,” he declared.

What that might mean became clear with the beginning of the college year in the fall. At a special meeting held in the chapel on Wednesday, September 25, 1963, Bowen informed deacons of the possibility that a “Negro girl at UNC-G”



would present herself sometime in the near future for church watch care or membership. That evening and again the following Sunday, deacons struggled with what to do, seemingly uncomfortable with their policy of a few years earlier that stipulated the name of a black candidate coming forward during a Sunday morning invitation be submitted (together with the names of that day's white candidates) to the membership committee instead of being immediately voted on. Further complicating the situation was the membership requirement found in the church's constitution, last printed in 1906 and not superseded, that a vote on membership must be unanimous unless a negative vote proved to be without basis.

The minutes of those meetings preserve a set of handwritten notes of the discussion made by the secretary but not formally added to the record. The struggle is palpable, as several deacons stated that it would be unconscionable to close the doors of the church to someone with black skin while others expressed their concern over how the congregation would react, especially if caught unaware. "How can we afford to do less than Jesus did?" one deacon asked, with another deacon concluding that the church would lose its witness in the community if it failed to do what was morally right. Others worried that such action might divide the congregation, which brought the response that deacons needed to help lead the church in this test of faith.

In the end Dr. Bowen agreed to meet with the student to determine her sincerity and level of interest in undergoing what might be a difficult experience. The story's denouement was not happy. The individual whose intentions were being questioned was almost certainly Yvonne Cheek, who that year was one of ten black students enrolled in a freshman class at UNC-Greensboro that numbered over one thousand. Dr. Cheek recalled that she visited First Baptist in the fall of 1963 because going to a Baptist church on Sundays was part of her upbringing. All the churches sent buses to the campus and she simply came with several friends from her dorm. Although worship was different from what she had known at home in Henderson, North Carolina, Cheek continued to attend and, like most college students, never thought of joining the church she was visiting. She was stunned, therefore, when a deacon approached her on her third visit and told her that if she intended to join to please not walk down the aisle like "normal people." Yvonne Cheek (like Albion Tourgée a century earlier) did not return.

The coming years demonstrated that the issue of race would be discussed more openly. How new members were received emerged as a major topic of discussion for deacons beginning in 1968, when Bowen stated his belief that the church needed to alter its method in order to make progress. By the spring

of 1969, membership reports began to appear in the deacon minutes that reflected changes to the church's constitution and bylaws: candidates were listed by names and manner of membership requested along with birthdates, parents' names if the candidate was a child, previous church affiliation, and whether the candidate had con-



As evident in this photograph from 1957, the library organized by Alice Straughan was a popular gathering place on Sunday mornings.

ferred with the pastor and completed a series of orientation classes. A simple majority (and not unanimous) vote by the congregation upon presentation by the spiritual committee completed the membership procedure.

On February 6, 1969—Race Relations Sunday—the church library invited members to check out books “about the history of the Negro, his culture, and the Negro in society today.” A year later, in November 1970, members had the opportunity to view the film *Black and White Uptight* and participate in an ongoing dialogue on “practical everyday relationship between white and black people” with members of Providence Baptist Church, one of the city's oldest and most prominent black churches. If First Baptist remained almost uniformly of one color, the decade's experiences on the question of membership and the sponsoring of a mission in a poorer neighborhood at least made tangible the idea that the church could not ignore social concerns if it wanted to remain relevant.

The church witnessed in other ways a growing rift with the broader culture. Deacons approved a resolution in April 1963, for example, opposing legislation before the General Assembly that would loosen Sunday closing laws for businesses, noting with concern that courts in Pennsylvania had already upheld similar legislation. The issue of alcohol consumption also returned, this time in the guise of a proposed change in alcohol beverage control that would allow for “brown-bagging or liquor by the drink.” The bulletin for February 26, 1967, printed in full a resolution opposing the legislation that the congregation adopted at a church conference on March 1.

In the light of such issues, Dr. Bowen's oft-repeated injunctions on the importance of families worshipping together came as no surprise and were bol-

stered early in 1964 as construction projects at the church neared completion. The new educational wing was ready for use on Sunday, January 12, 1964, with space for four nursery departments, six beginning departments, seven primary departments, and a handicapped children's room. A flurry of interesting reports came to deacons in March: Alice Straughan reported for the library committee that the recently expanded church library, with its collection of nearly sixty-five hundred volumes, was one of the largest in the Southern Baptist Convention, while Oka Hester on behalf of the recreation committee presented the rules of operation for the Christian activities building and introduced Jim Seaton, a young graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University who would serve as activities director. But the most exciting story appeared in the *Greensboro Record* on Saturday, March 14, 1964, under the headline, "Culmination of a Dream." A page of photographs illustrated some of the building's new facilities in use: senior citizens reading in their lounge, women sharing homemaking tips in the kitchenette, teenagers sitting at the snack counter. The building also sported a six-goal basketball court, handball court, weight-lifting room, games room, art and crafts rooms, exercise equipment, bowling lanes, skating facilities, volleyball court, and both men's and women's locker and shower facilities.

Deacon chairman Lewis Boroughs, with Judge York, associate pastor Jack Causey, and Dr. Bowen also taking part in the occasion, cut the ribbon to for-



The educational space known as the children's wing was under construction in 1963.

mally open the building the next afternoon. The church also anticipated the completion of renovations in the main building with the library being enlarged, the nursery departments rearranged, an elevator installed, and the parking lot resurfaced. Redecoration in the sanctuary (painting, drapery, and, until cancelled later, carpeting of the aisles and platform) would presently be undertaken.

One last notable building effort was undertaken before the end of the decade. Fred Williams of the building and grounds committee presented a plan in 1966 to replace the old frame house at Central Chapel with a one-story brick building; in May the congregation embarked on a drive to raise the \$17,500 required for the work. Six years after its establishment, the chapel mission had a Sunday School enrollment of 140, with twenty teachers preparing for an average weekly attendance of ninety-five members. In addition to a Training Union that averaged thirty-five individuals, there was both a chapel choir and classes for Royal Ambassadors and Girls' Auxiliary. The much-needed education building was dedicated on March 19, 1967, with mission committee chairman Mack Smith recognizing the participants, Claud Bowen bringing greetings from the church, and S. C. Ray delivering the dedication address.

By then Claud Bowen had pastored the church for almost twenty years. In November 1967 the Baptist State Convention meeting in Asheville elected him president, the first of two one-year terms. "Words cannot express my gratitude for your congratulations upon my election," Bowen wrote the congregation.



Deacon chairman Lewis Boroughs speaks at the opening of the Christian Activities Building, March 15, 1964. Associate pastor Jack Causey is seated to the left.

“The greatest joy of this experience is that it means much to our church.” He thanked deacons a year later at the end of his first term for their patience and spirit. He had traveled the state during that time, visiting and speaking at six colleges and a like number of associations and also the children’s home in Thomasville, in addition to making the rounds of meetings his office demanded. A trustee at a variety of Baptist institutions, Bowen was also a ready traveler overseas; he had



The new building at Central Chapel is pictured at the time of its dedication on March 19, 1967.

led a group on a three-week trip to the Holy Land the summer of 1967, witnessing some of the changes wrought by Israel’s Six-Day War.

As Claud and Louise Bowen’s twentieth anniversary at First Baptist approached, the building and grounds and finance committees recommended that the old parsonage be sold and property secured for building a new one. In July 1967 a suitable lot costing fourteen thousand dollars was located at 3006 Madison Avenue; on March 24, 1968, the congregation approved a resolution to build a house on the lot not to exceed fifty thousand dollars in cost. “One of the most

outstanding times of our lives,” Dr. Bowen observed, began when he and Louise moved into the new parsonage in September 1968. The church would celebrate the anniversary on Sunday, September 8, and at the evening service the congregation heard from Bowen sons Davis and Dick about the work they were now doing: Davis served in the Training Union Depart-



Claud and Louise Bowen prepare to host an open house at the new parsonage, December 6–7, 1968.

ment of the Baptist State Convention, and Dick was studying in the School of Pastoral Care at Baptist Hospital; daughter Carol was a senior at Wake Forest University. Members who joined the church during the time of Bowen's pastorate wore special name tags during the reception that followed the evening service, at which time a gift of one thousand dollars was presented to Claud and Louise.

After twenty years Dr. Bowen could look out at a church that in some ways was supremely confident of its status. A special committee on the constitution and bylaws, for example, chaired by the perspicacious Bill York, presented first to deacons and then, in January 1967, to the congregation an extensive revision that represented the first overhaul of the documents since 1906. Into this revision went the church's adoption of the "1963 Baptist Faith and Message." There were other changes in a document that retained the 1906 Preface but otherwise rewrote the constitution to reflect the present structure of the church staff and committee system. In Article II (Purpose), a section was added to the statement of the church's autonomy that called for the church to make public as occasions arose "its stand with respect to any particular sin or evil" by resolutions duly adopted by the membership. Article III (Membership) expressed the desirability, but not requirement of a unanimous vote when receiving new members, with the pastor and deacons investigating and reporting to the membership on any instance in which the vote was not. After discussion at a church conference, a clause enjoining members not to become a stumbling block to a younger brother was added to the injunction for members "to be just in their dealings, faithful in their engagements, guarded in their conversation, and exemplary in their deportment." A section was placed among the miscellaneous provisions of Article VII stating that meetings of a secular nature were prohibited in "any" of the church's buildings, which would include the new Christian activities building. The section "Financial Policy" mandated that the finance committee work in conjunction with deacons in securing regular contributions from the membership. The bylaws listed twenty-five standing committees. Election and duties of deacons and the finance committee were described in detail. Finally, after a bit of historical research, the covenant once used by the church, at least since the time when Dr. Rowe inscribed it into the church minute book in 1885 and last appearing in the 1906 printing of the *Member's Manual*, was recovered and restored to its rightful place. On February 12, 1967, the revised constitution, bylaws and covenant were adopted by the membership.

The church was adopting more effective ways of reaching its members: a pictorial directory was created for the first time in 1967. There was also this message from Dr. Bowen that appeared in the bulletin for June 8, 1967: "Greet-

ings to the members of First Baptist Church through our first mailed out bulletin. This communication affords me a wonderful opportunity to talk about our work with every family of the church. It will be the means of keeping the membership informed about the business and promotion of the entire program.”

As the decade drew to a close, however, and the final years of Dr. Bowen’s pastorate unfolded, concerns about the budget, the role of women, the growing demand for daycare, the involvement of youth, and a membership that had plateaued in size began to emerge. While none of these issues derailed the church, they did point toward an era in which the church’s status would be different from what it had been in the days of unparalleled and seemingly effortless and unending growth.

# 10

## The White Columns

From the White Columns—*the name of the church newsletter, 1974-90*

In the church bulletin for April 23, 1961, S. C. Ray announced that First Baptist was one of twenty-five churches chosen by the Southern Baptist Convention for an “adult education experiment.” Adult groups would gather during the Training Union hour on Sunday evening to study one of four topics deemed important for contemporary Christian families: Miss Sylvia Lewis would lead a group in “Single Adults in Today’s World,” city schools superintendent Dr. and Mrs. W. J. House would meet with married adults having no children in “Where Two Are One,” a third group would be led by Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Boroughs in “Living with the Pre-School Age Child,” and county schools superintendent Mr. and Mrs. E. P. Pearce would be the facilitators in “Living With the School Age Child.” Resource packets were provided to assist with various kinds of group discussions. “Many of you have been requesting just such a program,” Ray noted.

The “Adult Seminar,” as it came to be known, evolved during the decade and reflected the concerns of the day. For example, in 1964, just before leaving for Washington, DC, to assume the presidency of the National Education Association, Dr. Lois Edinger spoke on the subject of “Service and Education,” a topic that nestled nicely in the optimism of President Johnson’s Great Society. The next year deacon Sam Wilson continued a series about “Twentieth Century Christians” with a discussion of the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. “The Church Confronts Today’s World” was the subject of a 1966 seminar conducted by Rev. Otis L. Hairston, longtime pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, located in Greensboro’s old freedmen suburb of Warnersville. Toward the end of the decade, a series of six sessions on a book entitled *The Seventies* was offered, followed in 1971 with a discussion of one of the most intractable issues of the day, school desegregation, with chairman of the Greensboro Board of Education



and former deacon chairman Albert S. Lineberry Sr. “Our community has undergone many changes this fall,” the newsletter noted in September 1971. “Christians and church people have had a great deal to do with the orderly transition thus far. Come and hear first hand from Mr. Lineberry some of the implications of the changes.” Change seemed to be evidenced everywhere, and the church was no exception.

New additions to the church staff reflected how First Baptist understood its ministry. S. C. Ray reported to deacons on June 2, 1968, that he had initiated a study of the feasibility of establishing a day care program at the church for children between the ages of three and five. Dr. Bowen had strongly endorsed the idea, and the diaconate soon followed. At the next month’s meeting, Bowen was able to present the recommendation of the personnel committee that D. Jack Heath of Wendell (North Carolina) Baptist Church be called to supervise the expanded children’s ministry. Although implementing a full-time day care program ended up being postponed, by the time the kindergarten opened its eighteenth year in September 1969 there were three new classes for five-year-olds and one class for four-year-olds meeting three days a week and one class for three-year-olds meeting two days a week. Heath expected the program to receive state accreditation later that fall, as providing care and early education for children of working parents emerged as a significant part of the church’s ministry.



Jack Heath teaches children in the morning worship service in this photograph, ca. 1974.

At the same time two more staff members were added when Margaret Wilson of the music committee presented the names of Douglas and Julia Peoples of Calvary Baptist Temple in Savannah, Georgia, to be called respectively as minister of music and organist. After beginning their work in Greensboro in December 1969, the couple soon took the initiative to show one way in which the music ministry of the church could continue its relevance. Together with Bob Sessoms, the recreation minister, Doug Peoples announced in the church newsletter on June 10, 1971, that the youth would travel to Akron, Ohio, in July to work with former Central Chapel pastor Dale Smith in conducting a mission for children. The youth would host a Bible school in the mornings, assist local mission churches in canvassing and visiting in a neighborhood housing project during the afternoons, and sing in concert in the evenings at neighborhood venues such as local shopping centers. "We know you will not fail our youth in this project," Peoples wrote, as a group of fifty youth raised one-third of the three thousand dollars that this first "youth mission trip" required.

As 1971 drew to a close, the church offered an array of activities (many of them recreational in nature) in the hope of keeping ever-busy families engaged. Seminar offerings for November and December featured "Skills in Self-Understanding" and "Family Affairs." The Men's Fellowship (concerned by poor attendance during the fall) announced that its next speaker would be a surgeon from Baptist Hospital. The church's PeeWee Blues Cheerleaders made it to a semifinals contest, while plans were underway for a youth football banquet. Ceramics, just in time for the holidays, were ready for pickup in the Activities Building, where interested members could also attend a Christmas cake decoration demonstration led by church financial secretary Pat Chandler. (According to the newsletter the Activities Building was a busy place, with nearly seventeen hundred people entering the facility during the last week of January 1971.) Missionaries visited the church to lead a revival for members who were hearing impaired and to describe for the WMU activities in the Philippines, and Clara Brincefield was in town to show slides of her work in Chile for a Ladies Night meeting of the Men's Fellowship in December. Senior adults prepared for a visit to Old Salem, the youth solicited nominations for leadership positions on the Youth Cabinet, and the Chapel Choir sang for men at the McLeansville State Prison.



Clara Brincefield is pictured in an undated photograph, ca. 1980.

Behind the good cheer of the 1971 holiday sea-

son, however, were signs of shifting attitudes toward the church, some of which suggested that the church increasingly had to compete for members' time, money, and attention. The 1972 budget, for example, proved particularly hard to subscribe. As early as the fall and winter of 1969–70, the finance committee considered the idea of adopting a unitary budget, so difficult had it become in a period of economic inflation to maintain an even balance between current expenses and benevolences. Although the committee declined to pursue this option, deciding instead to intensify efforts to inform the congregation of the situation, pledging toward current expenses again initially fell short after the 1970 budget was adopted the next fall.

Now, a year later, church newsletters chronicled the difficulty of financially supporting the institution during inflationary times. The 1972 budget, adopted by the congregation on October 21, 1971, was the largest ever in the church's history, with current expenses increased over the 1971 budget by \$26,188 for a total of \$290,801. A similar increase was added to the benevolences portion of the budget, the bulk of which was designated for the convention's Cooperative Program with smaller sums directed toward Central Chapel, the Piedmont Baptist Association, the Baptist Student Union at UNCG, and radio broadcasts of Sunday morning services. According to the two-page presentation that appeared in the church newsletter for October 28, 1971, the total budget of more than half a million dollars allocated 56.58 percent for current expenses and, assuming the same level of giving as the previous year, 43.42 percent for benevolences. Pledging was scheduled for the last Sunday in October and the first two in November, but pledge cards were slow to return. The November 11 newsletter ran the headline, "Let's Finish the Job We Started," and observed that the 825 pledges that had been received fell far short of the 1,424 cards on hand at the end of the previous year's campaign. Although pledges continued to trickle in, finance committee chairman Lewis Boroughs was compelled to state in the November 18 newsletter that "our pledges have not backed up our actions!! Our church has never been known as a church that did not meet its obligations." Nevertheless, the budget remained underpledged by 29 percent.

As the books were closed on the previous year's giving, the finance committee reported in February 1972 that actual giving, which reached a record of more than \$500,000, nevertheless fell short of the 1971 budget by five thousand dollars in current expenses and fifty-one thousand dollars in benevolences, which meant that for the second straight year giving toward missions causes lagged behind local expenses. This pattern continued through 1972 and would characterize the coming years despite the church's increasingly emphatic stewardship campaigns, replete with specially dedicated newsletters. By 1978, the finance

committee recommended that the budget be more realistically allocated 60/40 percent current expenses and benevolences, although, so long as the budget was adopted before pledging was undertaken, the congregation's year-to-year level of commitment to giving remained uncertain.

A different snapshot of how the membership regarded their church came in the form of an "Attitude and Experience" survey conducted by junior deacons in 1969. One of the survey's questions asked about attendance at Sunday evening worship: 113 participants said they attended regularly, 81 frequently, 173 infrequently, and 155 seldom or never. Changing the format of Sunday evening services, the survey suggested, would make little difference, with seventy-four stating that they would attend more frequently and 307 saying they would not. Less than 10 percent of the 519 respondents said they attended Wednesday evening prayer meeting either regularly or frequently. Over half thought an early Sunday morning worship service would be helpful, and a similar number said they would attend such a service. The possibility of a television ministry was also viewed favorably by a large majority.

More opinions, this time specifically from the youth, followed early in 1970, when the Youth Cabinet presented its own suggestions for improving church life. Dr. Bowen must have been alternately distressed, amused, and intrigued by what he learned. In addition to advocating that other members of the staff have an opportunity to preach on Sunday mornings, the youth urged that laymen, particularly youth, help lead services. "The 7 minute prayer could be used less often and silent meditation used instead," youth advised. "Sermons should be to the point and step on toes." Worship services should offer different hymns, present ensemble music, and feature choir processions. Apart from Sunday morning, "mixed recreation between boys and girls and different age groups would be a lot of fun," while rotating teachers would freshen Sunday School lessons. The youth also proposed a host of activities intended to keep the church relevant for young people: undertake community action projects like city beautification and antipollution activities and help others through tutoring students and visiting the elderly.

In an age that heard the cry of equal rights from many groups, perhaps no issue generated more controversy in the church than the recommendation made by deacons in November 1970 to amend the church's constitution and bylaws by adding the words "adult male or female" to the statement of who qualified to serve as a deacon. After being discussed the previous Wednesday evening, the amendment came to a congregational vote on Sunday, February 14, 1971. The vote of 388 in favor and 325 against failed the two-thirds majority needed to adopt the revision. Several years more would pass before the church determined that women were eligible to be deacons.

On March 26, 1972, Dr. Turner returned to the church one last time to celebrate his birthday (his ninety-fourth), as he had every year since his retirement. This time he shared in a Sunday evening reception with Clara Brincefield, who was about to return to Chile after a furlough home. In November the congregation celebrated the twentieth anniversary of its move from the turreted building on Market Street that Turner had known to the one with white columns that Bowen helped build on Friendly Avenue. The congregation gathered for a special fellowship of remembrance and thanksgiving on Sunday evening, November 26, 1952. Surviving members of the building committee were recognized, as was architect Albert Woodroof. A color slideshow of the groundbreaking and dedication ceremonies was shown, and a recording of Dr. Turner's dedicatory sermon was played. Later that same week, the church library continued the celebration by observing its twenty-fifth anniversary. Having started in a Sunday School room in the West Market Street church with four hundred used books and a \$250 donation, Alice Straughan and a host of library personnel had helped to grow more than a hundred other libraries in churches across the South.

In the midst of these landmarks, Claud Bowen announced to the congregation at the close of 1972 that he would retire the following July. "Our family came to Greensboro more than twenty-four years ago when you invited me to become your pastor," Bowen wrote. "These years have passed rapidly, and as we look back over them, we thank God for the many blessings He has given our church." Bowen concluded that "an emphasis on evangelism, missions, stewardship, youth and worship has been the foundation of our



**FBC, Greensboro,  
Pastors Honored**

First Church, Greensboro, and its pastor of the last 60 years, Claud B. Bowen, left, and J. Clyde Turner, were honored in Raleigh last week. See story and pictures on Pages 4-5.

**R Biblical  
RECORDER**  
FEBRUARY 6, 1971

First Baptist Church, Claud B. Bowen, and J. Clyde Turner were recognized by the Baptist State Convention on January 21, 1971, for sixty years of leadership in the Cooperative Program and worldwide Baptist mission causes. (Cover from the Biblical Recorder of February 6, 1971)

work." Chairman of deacons William M. York responded in tribute by commenting, "The Bible teaches that the Lord directs the steps of a good man. Our beloved pastor is truly a good man." In describing Bowen's accomplishments, York listed first his leadership in the church's great building program: the worship, educational and recreational facilities on West Friendly Avenue, Lawndale and Hunter Hills Baptist churches, and Central Chapel. Praise for Louise Bowen came from Rachel Shackleford, director of the WMU: "Whether as Sunday School Nursery Coordinator, teacher of Married Young People or Adults, Sunbeam Director, WMU Corresponding Secretary, or Vice-President, chairman of standing committees, or WMU Director, she has assumed her share of the work load of First Baptist Church." Mrs. Bowen's influence, like her husband's, extended beyond the local church, as she had served as president of the North Carolina Pastors' Wives and was currently recording secretary of the WMU in North Carolina and president of the Pastors' Wives of the Southern Baptist Convention.

During the next six months, the church collected a love offering for the Bowens that eventually amounted to thirty-five thousand dollars. This allowed them something they had never known during their years in Greensboro—a home of their own. By the end of February 1973, a pulpit committee of sixteen individuals was elected by the church to begin the arduous task of finding Bowen's successor. Bowen agreed to a request from deacons to remain on the job until September 1, allowing him to complete a full twenty-five years of ministry in Greensboro and providing the pulpit committee two additional months to complete its work.

Sadly, one person elected to the committee would not serve. At the deacon meeting in April 1973, chairman York, feeling ill, asked vice chairman Seth Macon to preside. William M. York would never return; after being hospitalized, he died on Sunday, May 20, 1973, at age seventy-three. A member of the law firm of York and Boyd since 1924 and president of the Newman Machine Company, "Judge" York had helped organize the city's first juvenile court in 1927. At the church he had chaired the finance committee for twenty-two years and was serving his second term as deacon chairman. For more than thirty years he had taught the Vanguard Class, one of the largest of the men's Sunday School classes. In his tribute Dr. Bowen singled out York's strong beliefs, his willingness to act, and his love and generosity. "Surely the Lord has already said," Bowen concluded, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Deacons added to the minutes of their June 1973 meeting the verse from Revelation 14:13: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest their Labours; and their works do follow them."

Dr. Bowen's twenty-fifth anniversary as First Baptist's pastor fell on Sunday, August 26, 1973, and this was the day the church observed his retirement. Sunday morning tributes were presented by Dr. Baker James Cauthen, executive secretary of the Foreign Mission Board; Dr. W. Perry Crouch, general secretary and treasurer of the Baptist State Convention; Jim Melvin, mayor of Greensboro; and Seth Macon, chairman of deacons. The love gift was presented, along with an antique silver tureen from the women of the church for Mrs. Bowen to use in decorating her new home. More than three hundred letters of tribute were received—so many that they composed two volumes when bound. Even in excerpts these written memorials are moving. J. Clyde Turner in Raleigh, who was unable to attend the service in person, told Bowen, "I shall miss you, for you have been like a son to me." According to Randall Lolley at First Baptist Church Winston-Salem, "You do not only proclaim the gospel, you demonstrate it." For church member Becky Bell, demonstrating the gospel meant taking time to talk and to listen: "As you know, I am handicapped and so many people don't take time to listen. This is why I consider you not only as my pastor, but my special friend." For Mayor Melvin it meant commending "you for your fine work on behalf of city employees, and in particular, the Greensboro Fire Department," where Bowen had served as a chaplain and enjoyed sharing meals with the firemen. For Rabbi Arnold Task of Temple Emanuel, it meant acknowledging that "you have many close friends in the Jewish community who look to you with great admiration." For Dr. Richard A. Kelly, it meant moving the church from aloofness "to whole-hearted acceptance of various groups such as the deaf, my retarded children and blacks." For Bob Sessoms of the Church Recreation Department of the Sunday School Board and the church's former recreation director, it meant getting down on the floor and playing marbles with his son. For Professor Richard Spencer of Southeastern Seminary and one of the "preacher-boys" whom Bowen mentored, it meant being his "sole guiding-light in the early years of my faith."

At the morning service Bowen had been able to say little: "I want to thank the church for this gracious gift and for all that has been said; but more than anything, I am grateful for a church that has given me the liberty to preach the whole gospel for the whole world." That afternoon's farewell reception in the lower auditorium provided a more relaxed setting for conversation. Joe McNulty, reporter for the *Greensboro Daily News*, wrote that the receiving line stretched "down a long hall done in three colors of linoleum, all brown," past the kitchen and a bulletin board with the injunction, "Blossom Where You Are, Psalm 92:13," up the stairs and through more doors, "past the teen-age girls handing out name tags, and almost to the parking lot beyond." Hundreds had

lined up by the middle of the afternoon. "There were grannies in orthopedic overshoes, their glasses chained to necklaces; teenyboppers of the Baptist Youth with scrubbed, lacquered faces, wearing Mary Janes and cork-soled sandals and clinging, skimpy dresses of freaked out grape and tangerine; stately, bejeweled matrons, like ocean liners reeking of gardenia." At the head of the line, Louise Bowen was wearing a turquoise dress with an orchid pinned to it. Next to her stood Claud Bowen, who, according to the exclamation of a young person in a flowered dress, did not even look like a preacher. McNulty continued: "How is a preacher supposed to look? Dr. Bowen was decked out in a white sport coat, blue slacks and shirt, white shoes and a blue and white striped tie. His hair, swept away from his face as if he were heading into a stiff wind, is silver and gunmetal gray, and he was wearing silver-rimmed glasses." The reporter then tried to capture the conversation flowing around Bowen:

He looked prosperous and content. "Do you know we've had two priests and several black preachers come through the line today?" Dr. Bowen is staying late into the afternoon. "Friendship like that is what I really appreciate. . . Well, hello there, glad y'awl could come. This all your younguns?" "Two out of three. . . . Boy if you would have told me seven years ago when you married us that now we'd have three younguns, I don't know what I woulda said." The father picked up his son and moved towards Mrs. Bowen. "That's another couple I married," Dr. Bowen says.

Off to the side, deacon Sam Wilson talking about why Bowen stayed at the same church for twenty-five years when other preachers were leapfrogging on their own or being bounced by unhappy congregations. "The answer is this man's heart."

"We never saw anything like it!" Bowen wrote in his note of appreciation that appeared in the next week's newsletter.

The pulpit committee, with William H. Westphal Sr. serving as chairman, worked with alacrity. In November 1973, Westphal announced in the church newsletter that the committee would make its recommendation of a new pastor on Sunday morning, December 2. For only the third time in the century, the congregation prepared to call a pastor. As was true of Turner and Bowen, the new pastor was a young man: Alton Howard McEachern was forty-one years old when Westphal introduced him to the congregation.

Alton McEachern was a native Georgian who had been pastor of St.



## Pastor's Family Will Be Here Sunday



Left to Right: Dr. McEachern, Andy, Bonnie, Mrs. McEachern (Betty), Kathy, Mike. (Dr. and Mrs. McEachern have a married daughter, Mrs. Suzanne Case, who lives in Louisville.) We welcomed our pastor last Sunday, and now next Sunday it will be our pleasure to welcome his family. Let's make them feel at home from the very start!

The McEachern family is recognized in the church newsletter of January 7, 1974.

Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, since 1966, where his congregation included professors and students from Southern Seminary. In fact, McEachern had taught at the seminary as an adjunct professor of Christian preaching and had been the first candidate there to complete the graduation requirements in the doctor of ministry program. A graduate of Truett-McConnell Junior College and Mercer University, McEachern had also studied with Dr. William Barclay at the University of Glasgow. Previously McEachern served pastorates in Indiana, West Virginia (where he helped to organize the West Virginia Baptist State Convention), and Georgia. Every Easter during his years in Greensboro, he would recall his ordination at Vineville Baptist Church in Macon, Georgia, on Easter Sunday, April 11, 1952. On that occasion McEachern's grandfather, W. L. Oxford, a Primitive Baptist minister, partook in the laying-on-of-hands service for his nineteen-year-old grandson, then a junior at Mercer University.

The church welcomed the new pastor on Sunday, January 3, 1974. "Overwhelming," wrote McEachern of the experience in the newsletter. "An old Eng-

lish divine said, 'No man should enter the ministry who had not that quality which kindles at the sight of men.' These initial services have been made up of 'Kindling' congregations." By the next Sunday, McEachern was joined by his wife Betty and their five children: Mrs. Suzanne Case of Louisville and Andy, Bonnie, Kathy, and Mike. The installation service took place on Sunday afternoon, January 27, when twelve hundred members and visitors crowded into the sanctuary. Words of welcome were offered by assistant pastor Del Suggs; deacon chairman Seth Macon; Rev. John D. Schofield, president of the Greensboro Ministers Fellowship; Dr. Perry Crouch, executive secretary-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention; and Greensboro Mayor Jim Melvin. Representing the youth of the church, Scott Lineberry read verses from Ephesians 4:1-16: "I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called." The charge to the church was presented by Mrs. Rachel Shackelford, director of the Woman's Missionary Union. The covenant with the pastor was offered by Rev. W. A. Duncan, superintendent of missions for the Piedmont Baptist Association, and Dr. William E. Hull, provost and dean of the School of Theology of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, presented the charge to the pastor. Dr. Vance Havner offered the prayer of dedication, and the sanctuary choir sang Mozart's "Gloria in Excelsis." Having sung two hymns, "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" and "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," the congregation was dismissed with the benediction by Rev. Troy Robbins, superintendent, Masonic and Eastern Star Home. "The day was all that could have been hoped, even to the beautiful warm weather," McEachern wrote in the newsletter. "We were honored to have five friends from the St. Matthews Church in Louisville present for the service."

There was no more telling reminder that First Baptist had entered a new age than the sad news of a few weeks later. On Friday evening, February 1, 1974, J. Clyde Turner died, two months short of his ninety-sixth birthday. Dr. McEachern expressed his gratefulness to have visited the hospitalized Turner only two days earlier.

In just one measure of his longevity, Turner had preached at First Baptist from the beginning of his pastorate there in 1910 until March 1972, twenty-four years after his retirement. But more than his many years was his staying power that impressed, as evidenced by the tributes that appeared in the church newsletter on February 7, 1974. Perhaps no one at the church had been closer to Turner than Claud Bowen, who had the unenviable task of succeeding him as pastor in 1948. "Dr. Turner was one of the best and finest men I have ever known. He treated me almost like a son," Bowen recalled. "In fact, he called me his 'preacher boy.' He made it easy for me to work in Greensboro by showing his

patience and great love for me.” Assistant pastor Del Suggs remembered that for six months after being baptized as a boy by Dr. Turner, the pastor would visit his home regularly, even though Del was the only one of the family who was a member of the church. Alice Straughan, who came to Greensboro in 1924 just out of college and who in later years was the guiding force behind the creation of the church library, remembered how Turner became like a father to her after she had lost her parents. She remembered especially his humor, as when she sent him a Valentine card that read, “If you won’t be my Valentine I’ll cry and cry and wish I had my nickel back.” He responded with a nickel. There were many more remembrances, which ranged from *Biblical Recorder* editor Marse Grant’s evaluation of Turner as “one of our greatest Southern Baptist leaders of this century” to the lasting impression made on church member Magdalene Wharton when, as a twelve-year-old student, she heard Turner preach how, as “living epistles,” a Christian’s life was “to be like a well-written letter, easily read because it is legible, neat, no smudges or blurs, but with punctuation, paragraphs, capital letters where needed, and even margins well aligned.”

The church decided in March 1974 to establish a lasting memorial to Dr. Turner at Southern Seminary. Accordingly, the J. Clyde Turner Visiting Professorship of First Baptist Church, Greensboro, for Missions, Evangelism, and Christian Preaching was created with the goal of raising thirty thousand dollars. The amount was soon in hand, and former deacon chairman Gay Hensley officially presented seminary president Duke K. McCall with the memorial fund on June 20. By the end of the month, 676 persons had contributed \$50,576. The first appointment to the visiting professorship came in April 1975 with the naming of Andrew D. McRae, general secretary and superintendent of the Baptist Union of Scotland. Dr. McEachern was appointed the next year, and he taught a four-week course on pastoral preaching drawing on ideas he had written about in two of his books: *Proclaim the Gospel: A Guide to Biblical Preaching* and *Growing Disciples in Preaching*.

The church found itself in an uncertain environment when Al McEachern came to Greensboro. Floodlights on the front of the building and the steeple were being turned off most nights; and meetings were not being held on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings during the energy crisis of 1974. McEachern brought a study to the attention of deacons in February 1974 estimating that 90 percent of downtown churches across the nation were dying. But he concluded that First Baptist Greensboro “is healthy, happy, and facing its greatest years of opportunity.” He certainly infused new energy into church activities, as worship and Sunday School attendance (including Central Chapel) grew and giving increased. “Well done. Right on,” McEachern remarked as he cited the evidence in the newsletter for April 25, 1974.

Thinking that perhaps he had been overlooked in recent years, Sunday, July 14 was declared to be "Vance Havner Day," as the longtime church member and evangelist from Jugtown, North Carolina, preached in the morning service and attended an autograph party that afternoon in the media center (the newest name for the church library) for his just-published *Though I Walk through the Valley*. Revival services were planned for October, with Dr. McEachern preaching and Don Hustad, professor of music at Southern Seminary, former organist for the Billy Graham Crusade, and editor of numerous hymnals, leading the music. For Advent observances, McEachern wore his ministerial robe as the church began a new practice of lighting candles arranged around a wreath.

The new year witnessed the establishment of the history committee in February 1975, chaired by Alice Stranghan with Sandra Canipe appointed as church historian and the committee charged with updating the church history and procuring a portrait of Claud Bowen. (In April the church commissioned artist



Artist Joe King's portrait of Claud Bowen is unveiled at the worship service on September 21, 1975. With Dr. Bowen are his wife Louise, Alice Stranghan for the historical committee, and Dr. McEachern.

Joe King of Winston-Salem to do the portrait at a cost of \$1,250, with the unveiling held on Sunday, September 21, 1975.) Also that month the Adult Seminar began a study of Thomas A. Harris's best-selling self-help book, *I'm OK, You're OK*. According to a survey that winter of 536 persons in the congregation (49 percent of whom were older than age fifty), most were overwhelmingly favorable toward innovations such as the Advent wreath, the pastor wearing his robe on occasion, Communion on Maundy Thursday, the placement of a cross in the baptistery at Easter, the moment of silence at the end of the Sunday morning worship service, the children's story in the worship service, and the Good Neighbor series in which representatives of other Christian communities in Greensboro spoke at the church. McEachern had also introduced



Dr. McEachern was known for his forceful and innovative preaching. (Undated photograph, ca. 1974)

to favorable reception what became one of his most distinctive styles of presentation: the dramatic monologue, which he introduced on Palm Sunday evening in the first floor auditorium with "Pilate in Exile."

McEachern used different styles of preaching than did his predecessors. Preachers are "spitting into the wind" when they try to communicate as they did a generation earlier, McEachern observed for a 1976 story in the *Greensboro Record*. His monologues included a host of characters ranging from local patriot and Presbyterian divine and educator David Caldwell to a humble offering plate commenting on what it witnessed as it moved up and down the pews. McEachern also described how he would sometimes preach a "devil's advocate" sermon in which he began by expressing disbelief in a concept like the resurrection. Sermons that "struck fire during the year" were preached again; McEachern grinned at the suggestion of summer reruns. But he argued that whatever innovation he

pursued, techniques were only “spice” to preaching’s central purpose. “The main course of a man’s preaching should be expository messages,” he concluded, “working methodically though the Scriptures and applying them to everyday life.”

With a new pastor the church was ready to embark on a tried-and-true enterprise: starting a new church mission. Sam Gladding, chairman of the mission committee, reported to the deacons in April 1975 on the spontaneous meetings of concerned individuals who lived in the Forest Oaks and Lynwood Lakes neighborhoods of southeastern Guilford County and who were not involved in any church splits (a primary concern whenever the church sponsored a new mission). Thirty-one individuals who had met for worship services then presented themselves for membership at First Baptist in the hope that the church would support their undertaking. They quickly secured the blessing of the congregation, and the search for property on which to build a new church began. By September the church agreed to help underwrite the mission’s purchase of a thirty-acre parcel of land with a brick house suitable for meeting along US 421 south of the city. Assistant pastor Del Suggs further agreed to serve as the mission’s interim pastor. The mission soon had as many as seventy members in Sunday School and worship and promised to continue growing. Before many more years the Southeast mission would be ready for constitution as an independent Baptist church.

At the end of 1975 and the completion of his second year as pastor, Dr. McEachern incorporated Southeast Chapel into a set of goals for his ministry that he set forth to the church. Topping his list was what he termed “effective evangelism” that would bring new members into the church. As McEachern observed, since coming to Greensboro he had buried more old members than baptized new ones. His second goal was meaningful worship, with a focus on biblical preaching, spiritual music, and significant observances of baptism and Lord’s Supper. Enhancing the ministry to senior citizens constituted another area of concern, and McEachern noted that a study committee had been formed to consider the feasibility of constructing a high-rise housing facility for the elderly. Growth in stewardship included more intentional estate planning. A new mission opportunity presented itself in helping Southeast Baptist Chapel to become a fully constituted church. Sanctuary improvement included installing a new sound system, improving the platform, adding lighting in the balcony, re-decoration, and providing additional parking outside the building and better handicapped access. Finally, McEachern hoped for a team ministry in which the goals of the pastor, staff, and congregation aligned.

Several of the pastor’s goals, such as helping to constitute a new church, could reasonably be reached; others, most notably determining the feasibility of an

elder-care facility, proved disappointing; and anyone who hoped once again to improve the sanctuary's acoustics was dangerously close to undertaking a fool's errand! The most crucial work McEachern set forth was worship and evangelism. They were also the hardest to gauge; measured by numbers, the church seemed to be benefiting in the short-term from the leadership of a new, dynamic young pastor, but long-term growth would prove more elusive. If goal-setting was the thing to do, however, McEachern would be assisted in 1978 when the church adopted a deacon proposal to amend the constitution and bylaws to allow for the establishment of a long-range planning committee to identify problems, opportunities, trends, and finances and to report to the church annually, as Bob Kelley set forth in his presentation to fellow deacons in November 1977.

Progress toward constituting Southeast Chapel came in October 1976 when the chapel's pulpit committee recommended that Jimmy D. Edwards be called as part-time pastor. Within a few months the congregation was paying the mortgage on its house and in November 1978 broke ground on a building costing \$458,000, with a construction loan secured by First Baptist. On January 27, 1980, 279 persons first met for worship in the new building, located at 5005 Liberty Road. The dedication service on March 20 was presided over by the chapel's first full-time pastor, Dr. Roger Bruce Gilbert, previously serving in Bladenboro, North Carolina, with a tribute to the work of Jimmy Edwards (then a regional manager for Baptist Book Stores) following the next week. Finally, after finance committee chairman William Westphal negotiated banking terms so that First Baptist retained financial responsibility and the chapel did not have to refinance its indebtedness, Southeast Baptist Church was constituted on May 2, 1982, with 362 charter members. At the church's tenth anniversary in 1985, Dr. Bruce Anthony, Gilbert's successor as pastor, would recall the pioneering efforts of the six women who had met for prayer in a small rented farmhouse, echoing in the daughter church how the mother church had begun over a century earlier.

As First Baptist amended its constitution and bylaws in 1978 to permit the establishment of a long-range planning committee, it also determined to return to the issue of allowing women to serve as deacons by authorizing the appointment of an ad hoc committee to study the issue's biblical, historical, and current background and to formulate a recommendation. The committee, chaired by Robert Caldwell working with Gladys Boroughs, Seth Macon, Virgil Mims, Mary Jon Roach, and Susan Suggs, recommended in April 1979, that the article in the bylaws concerning deacons be reworded to make it inclusive of women. When 817 members of the congregation voted on the committee's recommendation on May 31, an overwhelming 83 percent approved of the change.

Among the roster of sixty deacons serving in the 1979–80 church year appeared the names of the first four women (listed with their given names) to hold this office: May L. Adams, Lois V. Edinger, Margaret D. Mann, and Ginny V. Smith.

Fresh faces among deacons were matched with a freshening of the church facility. After a congregational discussion lasting an hour and a half, almost all of the 350 members present approved in February 1976, a renovation plan costing \$180,000 to be financed by three-year pledges. Several acoustical alterations were proposed: installation of a new amplification system and sound and light control booth in the balcony (with rewired chandeliers) and modification of the ceiling above the choir and organ chamber. The sanctuary was to be painted, the platform extended, the drapes cleaned, and cushions added to the pews. The conference room was refurnished and a new study for the associate pastor equipped. Hallways were painted, while the building was to be handicap accessible and the parking lot extended, with landscaping also planned for Central Chapel. “We have such fine tools for worship and ministry,” Dr. McEachern declared in a September 1977 newsletter as work neared completion. Pledging, unfortunately, in an economy that had just pulled through a second energy crisis, lagged behind construction, which meant that work was finished before it had been fully paid.

The pastor also sought to exert the church’s leadership in civic enterprises. On January 12, 1976, as the church marked the beginning of the nation’s bicentennial year, First Baptist hosted its first annual Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast, with Mayor Jim Melvin leading a delegation of local and state officials and guests to hear featured speaker Dr. Edward Hughes Pruden, former pastor of First Baptist Church of Washington, DC. “The purpose of the prayer breakfast,” McEachern wrote in the last newsletter for 1975, “is to invoke God’s guidance upon our officials and to express to them our support and appreciation.” Over the years the event would host US senators and congressmen and state governors and legislators and local officials of every stripe.

McEachern also spoke on occasion to social issues. Several days after the first prayer breakfast, the pastor wrote in the newsletter of his support of a city ordinance banning massage parlors that included sexual services. “This is not a religious or denominational issue,” he said, “but a moral one for the betterment of our community.” McEachern could also invoke Scripture if the issue required it. “What would the Hebrew prophets like Amos have to say to our generation?” he demanded to know, as the General Assembly demonstrated “greed and lack of moral courage” by voting to approve liquor-by-the-drink legislation in June 1978. (Although deacons had expressed their disapproval of similar legislation in September 1973, at the request of pulpit committee Chairman Bill Westphal,



who worried over how the issue might divide the congregation at a sensitive time, they only urged each member “to prayerfully consider this issue.”) When the matter came to a referendum vote in Greensboro early in 1979, McEachern again made his position clear by urging members to attend a Citizens United for a Better Greensboro rally at Friendly Avenue Baptist Church.

Despite signs that the church’s membership was aging, the concept of housing for the elderly proved too difficult to implement. By March 1981, after five years of study, an ad hoc deacon committee chaired by Franklin Paris studying the proposal’s feasibility concluded that other projects in the city such as Village Green were addressing the issue better than the church could, although an expanded ministry to the elderly did seem advisable. (In 1986, the church contributed \$25,000 in a consortium with other churches that eventually led to the establishment of Well-Spring Life-Care Retirement Community.) In the course of its investigations, the committee conducted a demographic study of the church that revealed an increase in the number of resident members aged fifty-one and older of nearly 2 percent (45.6 to 47.5%) between 1976 and 1978, with smaller decreases in the percentages of younger age groups (except for the group aged thirty-one to fifty, which recorded a slight increase). Although the number of baptisms in the period 1969–78 reached a high of sixty-one in 1978, and membership by transfer of letter grew by 133 in 1977 and 128 in 1978, real growth was negligible, with a net gain in membership of only five for the period between 1969 and 1978.

A few of the new members came through a ministry that resulted from the aftermath of the Vietnam War. At the end of 1979, the church endorsed a recommendation from Ray Anderson and Mike Andrews on behalf of another ad hoc committee to sponsor a refugee family being resettled in Greensboro. By the summer of 1980, the Khounsavanh family from Laos was adjusting to their new home. Mr. Phomma Khounsavanh spoke to the church in August 1981, fifteen months after his family’s arrival, about their experiences, including working at second-shift jobs, attending school, learning to use a washing machine and clothes dryer, gardening, and cutting wood to heat their home.

Other ministries were also at work. The Gerald Small Class for the hearing impaired was led by Wilma Small, Dr. Helen Stinson, and Louise Deshaies, with assistance by Robert Turner and Mary Chandler and a children’s class taught by Myrtle Ballard. In May 1985 Dr. Stinson sought to extend the class’s outreach by offering to church members a Wednesday evening signing class. The Happy Hearts Class for the mentally handicapped had its roots in the work of Irene Hill, whose Triginta Class had sponsored care for physically handicapped children in 1955. After beginning with only two members, the class had grown to



The Happy Hearts Inner-Rhythm Choir perform on the church lawn in this undated photograph, ca. 1975.

more than thirty by the 1980s, drawing members from across the community. Ministry to single adults marked another pioneering effort by interested church members. When the church joined the Southern Baptist Convention in recognizing the ministry in September 1981, it also marked the anniversary of the Sunday School's singles department, organized in 1964 and now numbering 135 members. Both single and married men (at the time women were still excluded) found another avenue of service in the work of the junior deacons, who, in the spring of 1983, sponsored a staff appreciation dinner that resulted in a profit of \$400 donated for use in the children's wing of the building. Despite their obvious differences and emphases, all these ministries evidenced recognition that a healthy congregation had a responsibility for reaching across barriers that separated believers.

Ministries rooted in the past and yet striving to remain relevant in the present were representative of the church as a whole, which, as it had before, witnessed the juncture of old and new in the makeup of its staff. S. C. Ray was called to be the church's associate pastor with a service of ordination conducted

on Sunday evening, October 31, 1976. Three years later Campbell College president Norman A. Wiggins announced that an honorary doctor of divinity would be conferred on Ray at the May 1979 commencement. Later that year, on November 4, 1979, Dr. Ray and his wife Marjie celebrated their thirty years as staff member and member of the church at an evening reception. Ray had prepared for the occasion a memoir, *I'm Glad I Stayed*, which he gave out freely to anyone who wanted a copy. "It would be impossible for Marjie and me to put into words an adequate expression of appreciation to the church for these happy years," Ray wrote in the newsletter. As he approached his sixty-fifth birthday in 1981, however, Ray announced his intention to retire on August 1 but to remain with Marjie active members of the church.

"We Are Glad You Stayed," proclaimed the newsletter of July 30, 1981, which was filled with tributes. "I am especially grateful to you for being my colleague and partner in ministry as associate pastor," Dr. McEachern wrote. "We have laughed and prayed together and borne our people's joys and sorrows. You have enriched my life and liberated my broader ministry." As Claud and Louise Bowen recounted, "We have faced many joys and many problems together. Just try to count the church dinners and suppers we have enjoyed together!" Southeastern Seminary president Randall Lolley, who had worked with Ray years earlier as an assistant pastor at the church, asserted that Ray was "one of the ten most influential persons on my life. . . . He taught me more in months than I had learned in years."

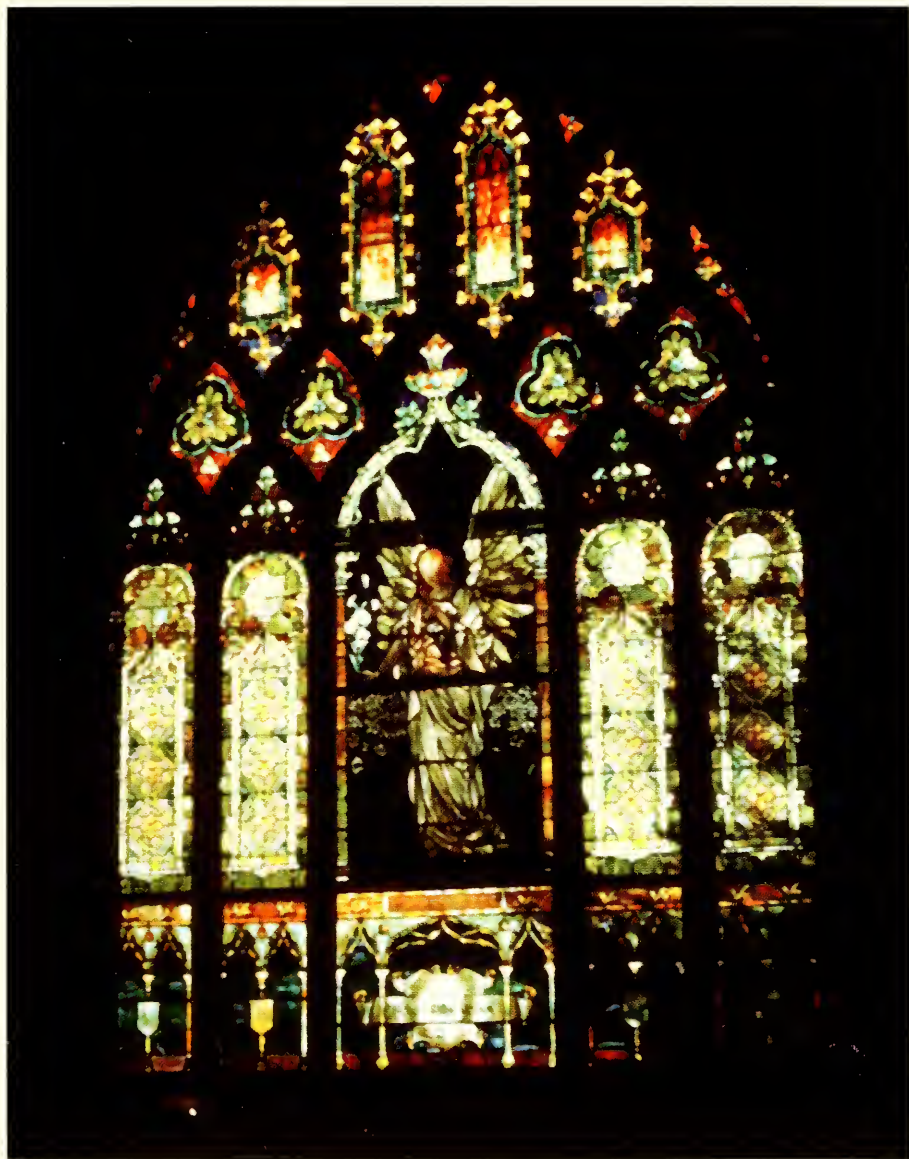
When Ray was called to be associate pastor, the church looked for someone who could fill the dual roles of administrator and minister of education. In 1977, it found such an individual in the person of Joseph M. Ratliff of First Baptist Church of Arlington, Texas, a recent graduate of Southwestern Seminary and a retired air force officer who was serving as minister of adult education. With his wife Joan and children Gerri Lynn and Stephen, the Ratliff family came to Greensboro in July 1977. When Dr. Ray retired four years later, the congregation called Michael G. Queen, who had interned at the church in 1978 and in May 1981 had just completed his master of divinity degree at Southeastern Seminary (having left a successful career in the supermarket business in West Virginia). Queen and his wife Bobbie and children Brett and Amy returned to Greensboro in September 1981, a month after Ray's retirement.

If new additions to the staff promised rejuvenation for the old church, there were also other early indications that some ties to the past would eventually be ruptured, at least when it came to denominational relationships. Dr. McEachern reported from the 1979 meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Houston that he had been encouraged by Southern Baptists' "heartbeart of mis-

sions and evangelism” but that the “political demagoguery” of the “extreme right wing” who had accused professors at all six Southern Baptist seminaries of heresy was “ridiculous.” As convention controversy grew in the coming years, the church came to realize that the denomination that had once been led by the likes of Clyde Turner and Claud Bowen was changing. By the end of 1982, deacons were expressing concern that the membership needed to be better informed of the issues that were dividing the convention. For many in the congregation, these issues became real when at the end of the decade they swirled around the leadership of Randall Lolley at Southeastern Seminary, the institution where Dr. Turner had left his papers.

Back in Greensboro, however, change seemed more manageable, in part because it appeared less threatening. The name of a meeting room was changed: “Lower Auditorium” became “Fellowship Hall” by vote of the deacons in 1982. Soon after his arrival Mike Queen took on the challenge of gathering new members into the church with the familiar approach of an outreach program designed to provide better follow-up with visitors and prospects. And, in 1982, Dr. McEachern assumed a leadership position in the convention when he was elected chairman of the board of trustees of the Sunday School Board. After a visit to Liberia later that year, McEachern’s preaching was praised by President Bradley Brown of the Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary as “warmly spiritual.”

Respected pastor, denominational leadership, and an energetic outreach program were all part of a familiar pattern of life for the church. Perhaps the most potent and tangible symbol of how rapidly the world was changing, however, was the computer, which came to First Baptist in 1983. After nearly a year of study, an ad hoc committee of the deacons chaired by Jack Swanson issued a report in November 1982 that included definition of terms such as “software,” “byte,” “disk drive,” “floppy disk,” and “hard disk” and went on to recommend the church’s first purchase of an office computer. The committee concluded that the office could best make use of a Datapoint 1560 with 64K RAM, an additional workstation, and a Microline 84 printer. Estimated expense, including maintenance, was \$19,500. Even if computer technology was then understood by only a few members, it was easier to see how the computer resembled the activities of the church: somewhat mysterious in its workings, able to accomplish great tasks, and on occasion capable of the most inexplicable crashes. Each of these traits would be evidenced in the church in the years that followed.



The Vernon Memorial Window is shown in an undated photograph. The church gave permission to Robert and Virginia Vernon in 1899 to install this window in the Washington Street Church as a memorial to their son, Robert Willis Vernon, who died of typhoid three years earlier at age nineteen. In the central panel, a winged figure holds a lamb. The window was reinstalled in the church on West Market Street in 1906. It was left behind when the church moved to its present location and, unfortunately, is presumed not to have survived the old building's demolition.



One of the stained glass windows that was part of the West Market Street church was preserved by longtime member Anna Sears. (Courtesy Charles Hartis)



The cornerstone of West Market Street church is shown above. (Courtesy Charles Hartis)



This sign stood sentinel for many years on the Balsley property fronting Mendenhall Street between Gaston Street and Guilford Avenue that the church bought in 1938. Dirt in the foreground suggests that construction had finally begun, which happened in 1950. (undated photograph, ca. 1950)



Participating in the groundbreaking for the new church on Sunday, August 6, 1950 are (from l. to r.) J. Clyde Turner, J. D. Wilkins Sr., William M. York, and Claud Bowen.



Former pastor W. Carey Newton (left) regales Claud Bowen and J. Clyde Turner in the pastor's study. Newton participated in the worship service on Sunday, November 30, 1952, when the church moved to its present location on West Friendly Avenue, and he returned for the dedication on January 1, 1956, which (judging from the careful arrangement of books) may have been when this photograph was taken.





The renovated sanctuary and Schantz organ are pictured in 2005 photo. (Courtesy Schantz Organ Company)



Church members gather with the family of Mrs. Tonya Holmes to dedicate her Habitat for Humanity house on July 27, 2008. Project leader Jim Clontz sits on the porch. (Courtesy Charles Hartis)



Ken Massey watches as the congregation gathers for an alternative outdoor worship service on Sunday, August 3, 2008. (Courtesy Charles Hartis)



This mosaic of Jesus blessing of the children, based on Mark 10:14, represents the artistry of Ali Mustafa of Amman, Jordan. The mosaic was purchased after the church's Habitat team viewed the artist's work during its construction project to Jordan in January 2008. The Visual Arts team elected to display the mosaic outside the sanctuary along the way where children come from Sunday School to the worship service.



The congregation reads to sing "Joy to the World" at the conclusion of its Christmas Eve 2008 worship service. (Courtesy Charles Harris)

# 11

## In the Weather Together

*We're all out in the weather together.*

—Randall Lolley aphorism

Mrs. Mozelle O. Smith died at age ninety-seven, in June of 1984. As an eleven-year-old, Mozelle Olive was baptized by Dr. William Carey Newton in the Washington Street Church, and she and her husband were the first to be married by Dr. Jacob L. White in the new church on West Market Street. At the time of her death, she was the church's longest surviving member and perhaps the last link to the church that predated Dr. Turner's pastorate.

There were other, less dramatic markers to the passage of time in the life of the church: John Hancock, building superintendent since the days when the congregation was preparing to move from West Market Street to the new church on Gaston Street, retired on November 30, 1982, after thirty years of service. Chris Williams, who had been one of the first teachers in the preschool children's program started by the church September 1952 (the same month John Hancock began work) and who for many years had also taught preschool children at Central Chapel and directed the four-year-old children's Sunday School, retired in May 1983.

James Horne, foreman of the custodial staff, formally retired after thirty years in August 1983 but continued to work at the church until 1992, completing thirty-nine years of service. And a longtime stalwart departed when Miss Alice Straughan died in February 1985. With her sisters Mattie and Mabel, Alice had operated bookstores in Greensboro and High Point beginning in 1924, embarking on a retail career unusual for women of the period. So successful were the sister entrepreneurs that they earned the sobriquet of "Booksellers to the South." But what had particularly endeared Alice was her initiative in organizing in 1947 what became the model of a church library.



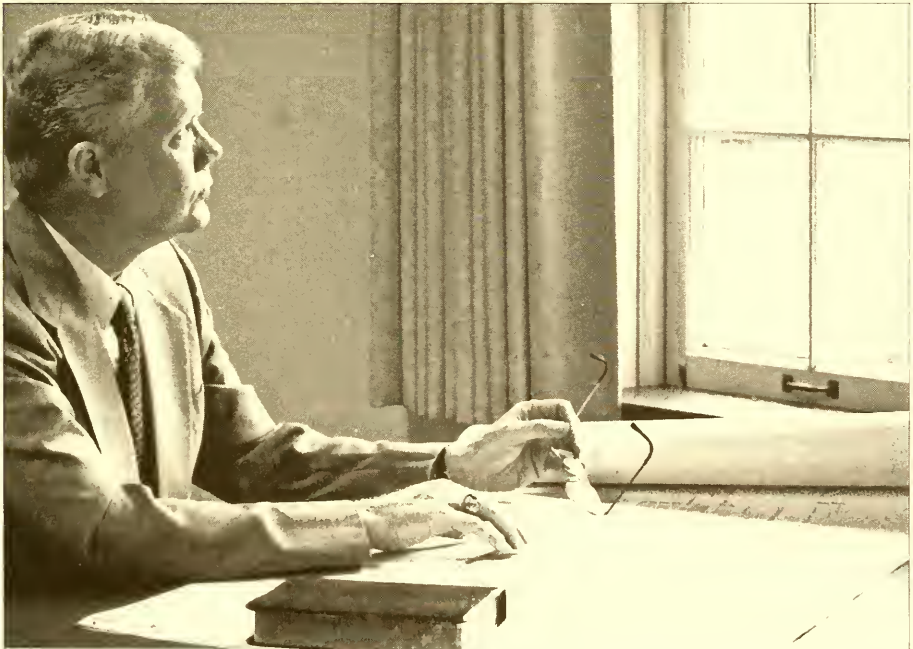
Mike Queen served on one of the church's first partnership evangelism mission teams in Brazil, in 1985.

Even with these departures, as Dr. McEachern entered his second decade of ministry at First Baptist, both he and the church were beneficiaries of a long-serving and capable staff. Mike Queen was made associate pastor in 1984 and was rapidly completing work on his doctorate degree at Southeastern Seminary. The previous year Jack Heath celebrated his fifteenth anniversary as minister to children. Doug and Ginger Peoples had led the music program for nearly as long. They were assisted by Joye Brannon, who had for the past ten years directed the youth choir and youth and adult handbell choirs. Administrator and minister of education Joe Ratliff, called in 1977, would be ordained in 1986. Vern Peterson had led the youth and recreation programs since 1979, longer than his most recent predecessors. And the support staff was just as experienced: Phyllis Anderson, Pat Chandler, Arlene Cole, Jo Covert, and Virginia Seltzer had each worked at the church for more than a decade.

Dr. McEachern's wide-flung influence during this period as a dynamic pastor and denominational leader is demonstrated by a sampling of the activities

that took him away from Greensboro in 1985. That February he led a study in Psalms (the subject of a commentary he had published through the Sunday School Board in 1981) at a winter Bible study for three churches in Spindale, North Carolina; later in the month he traveled to Washington, DC, as private sector advisory board member of the Congressional Select Committee on Hunger. He was preaching at three churches in San Francisco and delivering the Hester Lectures on Preaching at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in March, followed in April by a trip to Scotland with a group of seven church members taking part in what was billed as “Scotreach ’85.” In June, Mercer University (his alma mater) conferred on him the honorary degree of doctor of divinity, and in July he participated in the Baptist World Alliance meeting in Los Angeles. A prolific author (*Dramatic Monologue Preaching* had been published the previous year), McEachern also saw the publication of “Give Every Flying Minute,” an article about parenting, in the August issue of *Home Life*.

By outward appearances the church was doing well, full of bustle and showing little indication of the harrowing time it was about to endure. But matters had changed by 1987, a stressful year for the church and one that ended with the congregation struggling to come to terms with Dr. McEachern’s traumatic resignation. Crises had come to the church in years past: the fire that destroyed



Dr. McEachern is pictured in this undated photograph, ca. 1985.

the South Elm Street building in 1885, the struggle with indebtedness after the West Market Street edifice was erected in 1906, the uncertainty of the early Depression as banks closed, and the demands of the Second World War. Pastors, too, had occasionally found themselves at the center of controversy: Trezevant Harrison left in 1880, because he did not want to trespass on the patience of those who felt he was "not the man for the place"; Henry W. Battle angrily resigned in 1907 at a time when church finances were strained. Few members of the church, however, were able to draw either comfort or insight from whatever lessons the past had to offer when they read the headline in the *Greensboro News and Record* for Tuesday, December 1, 1987, "McEachern Resigns First Baptist Pulpit." The activities that had drawn the membership together in earlier years such as church construction and the sponsoring of mission churches were not enough to overcome the pain occasioned by McEachern's departure.

Although no one event can be singled out as causing the trouble that followed, the church faced a multiplicity of difficult issues that pointed toward problems that took root two years before McEachern's departure, beginning with difficulty at financing the renovation of a building that by now had served a generation with only minor modifications. Even when uncomplicated, church renovation projects and their financing can quickly generate controversy. In 1985, they were complicated. Deacons watched a slide presentation on March 5, 1985, as associate pastor Mike Queen proposed a three-year fund-raising campaign for needed renovations in the church. Queen observed that capital needs, instead of being part of a regular budget, had always depended on memorials, wills, and bequests. Simple maintenance of the aging facility, however, would no longer suffice, especially in the face of pressing needs, and continued reliance on special gifts for funding was inadequate. An outdated kitchen posed a safety hazard; the roof over the children's wing was leaking; the boiler and air-conditioning tower were derelict; outmoded Sunday School rooms failed to provide adequate space for larger, couples classes. To better determine exactly what should be done, deacons endorsed Queen's presentation by directing chairman Dave English, finance committee chairman Linville Roach, and Dr. McEachern to appoint a capital needs evaluation committee to study the issues raised by Queen's presentation and to offer recommendations that would address them.

This committee, chaired by Alex Brown, moved quickly and agreed with the food services and building and grounds committees to press ahead with kitchen renovation at a cost of \$115,500, which the congregation approved on June 16. Proceeding further, however, soon became more difficult. On August 4, 1985, the congregation authorized the spending of \$11,000 for a design study of the heating, cooling, interior design, and space utilization of the building's educa-



tion space, but it rejected a second resolution calling for the expenditure of \$34,000 to retain a consultant of the Southern Baptist Convention's Stewardship Commission to lead a capital funds campaign. The congregation seemed to be saying that if the church was going to embark on a major effort to raise money, the tried-and-true model of stewardship, with no external consultation and promotion, was to be found in the example of Dr. Turner and Judge York. Following on the heels of this decision was a sobering reminder of the state of church finances when the 1986 budget of \$1,518,889 as adopted by the congregation went undersubscribed with only \$952,008 pledged by Thanksgiving.

At this juncture Dr. McEachern laid out his goals for the next decade in his Mission GSO plan, which he introduced to the congregation in a sermon on January 2, 1986. In addition to updating the goals of a decade earlier, McEachern added an eighth concerning the Sunday School, which fit nicely with the search then underway for a new minister of education (the position had been separated from that of administrator). "The dream sets the direction," McEachern wrote in his plan, which for him meant, "Growth through the Sunday School. Our church membership (2,505 resident) and Sunday School enrollment (1,941) are within 100 of 1945. We reached a peak in 1955 and have declined steadily since that time." There were also positive signs, however, as McEachern noted that financial stewardship had grown from \$719,000 in 1975 to \$1,574,000 a decade later. The church growth goals he wanted to set also included doubling the number of baptisms (thirty-seven was the average for each of the past ten years) and sponsoring a new church mission, all of which would require careful coordination with whatever facility requirements the capital needs committee identified. That committee was now ready to make its report to deacons.

Alex Brown's committee formally presented its report on March 3, 1986. In addition to reworking the kitchen, the study concluded that the children's wing required a new roof; the building facilities needed restoration and rehabilitation, which included moving dividing walls in the Sunday School area, upgrading lighting, painting and wallpapering, carpeting sanctuary aisles, rearranging choir space, installing acoustical tiling, providing louvered shutters in the sanctuary, reworking bathrooms, creating a bride's dressing room, and extending the porte cochere to improve the parking lot entrance to the church; and furniture and equipment needed replacing. The committee made no recommendation of future mission activity, pointing out that it had not been charged with this responsibility. Other proposals to reconfigure office and educational space on the second and third floors, build racquetball courts in the activities building, and fund a television ministry were deemed inappropriate at

the present. The total expenditure called for in the report came to two million dollars, which would leave the church with a strong “home-base” for future growth.

It seemed unlikely that such a huge undertaking would come to pass without a renewed emphasis on missions. As it happened, a project was in the offing, the result of a request from the Piedmont Baptist Association early in 1984 for assistance in starting a mission in northwestern Greensboro. As the church prepared to celebrate its 125th anniversary—replete with a huge cake reminiscent of the one baked a quarter century earlier—deacon Fred Binder presented and the congregation adopted a “New Church Proposal” at the Sunday morning service on March 18, 1984. Two years later a site of approximately thirteen acres was located in the city’s northwestern quadrant on Lake Brandt Road between Old Battleground Road and Lawndale Drive in a growing and upscale neighborhood. The lot, along with expenses for water and sewer hookup and an engineering study, would cost \$356,400. Now deacons, who had waited for Mike Queen to present this information before acting on the capital needs study, were ready to take up a recommendation from the finance committee that the church embark on a campaign to raise \$2,500,000, including a provision to spend



The church celebrated its 125th anniversary on March 18, 1984. Posing with a cake (l. to r.) are Alton McEachern, Claud Bowen, S. C. Ray, and Perry Crouch of the Baptist State Convention.



Joye Brannon leads the Sanctuary Choir in rehearsal in 1986.

\$50,000 on the fund-raising program of the Southern Baptist Convention's Stewardship Commission called Together We Build.

At this juncture, several important changes in the staff occurred. Longtime minister of music Doug Peoples and his wife, Ginger, the church organist, unexpectedly resigned on July 30, 1985, with the congregation given little explanation about their sudden departure. On January 6, 1986, the congregation called John A. Setchfield, with his wife Joyce, from First Baptist Church of Columbia, South Carolina, to be the minister of education. The bittersweet leaving of associate pastor Mike Queen, who most recently had worked tirelessly in organizing the Brandt Oaks mission effort, resulted from his announcement in June that he had accepted his first pastorate at First Baptist Church of Wilmington. The news was greeted with applause among the deacons and thanksgiving by the congregation for someone who had dedicated himself to pursuing God's calling after leaving a successful business career. The following August, thirty-year-old Kelly Brown, pastor of Meigs Baptist Church in Meigs, Georgia, came to Greensboro with his wife, Donna, and son, Ryan, as the new associate pastor with special responsibility for heading up the Brandt Oaks mission. The new staff arrangements were completed when Joye Brannon, after serving an interim position, was called in April 1987 to be the minister of music, followed the next month by Billy W. Summers, a graduate of Southern Seminary, as music assistant and organist.

Before Queen headed for Wilmington, the congregation had to decide if it wanted to proceed with the capital needs program and mission project. The idea of turning to the Stewardship Commission for assistance in fundraising proved so problematic (after all, the congregation had rejected a similar proposal the previous year) that deacons determined the day before the vote that it would be considered separately from the other recommendations. The congre-

gational meeting on Sunday, May 4, 1986, that approved all the recommendations, including the one on fund-raising, was contentious enough (as moderator, Dr. McEachern had ruled that a deacon who had tried to speak was out of order) that deacons discussed the matter in detail at their June meeting. Chairman Jim Austell asked deacons to provide feedback and input on a range of questions and concerns that had been raised by the members, the result of which was a lengthy discussion in which Dr. McEachern addressed misgivings over the absence of a parliamentarian at the congregational meeting and an apparent division among deacons. Other concerns indirectly related to the issues at hand also emerged including the pastor's assertive leadership, a lack of openness in decision-making, poor communication between church leaders and the congregation, and an unresponsive, overly bureaucratic church organization—all of which suggested a deeper sense of disquiet. The situation outside the church walls was not much better.

The eighty-five-year-old evangelist and longtime church member Vance Havner died on August 12, 1986. Ever pungent in his preaching, Havner remarked, "Our greatest hindrance in the church today is within our own ranks. We can't get to the goal for stumbling over our own team. We furnish our greatest interference." Stumbling or not, First Baptist had begun to struggle with what it meant to be an effective witness for Christ in a culture that was more indifferent toward church than it had been a generation earlier. Not only was the church's role in the community changing; its status in the Southern Baptist Convention was also being altered as denominational leaders moved in a more fundamentalist direction.

Early in 1985, just before Mike Queen presented the idea of a capital needs campaign, deacon chairman Dave English appointed Al Lineberry Sr., Seth Macon, Franklin Paris, and Joe Reeves to serve on an ad hoc committee to consider how to respond to recent events in the convention. Deacons had already tabled a motion to send to the congregation a document written by McEachern entitled, "Here We Stand," which reaffirmed principles such as the lordship of Christ, the authority of Holy Scripture, the autonomy of the local church, the separation of church and state, and a worldwide mission, the support of which "we have been exemplary since 1910." A second document, "An Affirmation," written by deacon Marvin Bass, had also been initially tabled by deacons, although now the committee recommended that the statement's affirmation of the "1963 Baptist Faith and Message," its expressed confidence in the work of the convention's seminaries, and its assurance of the church's willingness to cooperate with all Southern Baptists in efforts to proclaim the gospel throughout the world be shared with the members. A motion to publish "An Affirmation" in the

newsletter and to distribute it in both the state and national conventions was approved. Not for the last time would the church attempt to find a way to remain true to what it saw as the historic principles of the denomination while objecting to what it considered to be attempts to undermine those principles.

Such an approach had its critics. As the church prepared to inaugurate a "Shared Ministry" program in April 1986 as a way for members to share joys and sorrows and develop stronger ties within the congregation, critics like W. A. Criswell of First Baptist Church of Dallas declared, "A laity-led, layman-led, deacon-led church will be a weak church anywhere in God's earth. The pastor is the ruler of the church. There is no other thing than that in the Bible." Such talk sounded increasingly strange to a congregation which had a long and significant tradition of lay leadership.

Certainly it was not a weak church that gathered at the site of the Brandt Oaks mission on July 6, 1986, where Jack Heath reported a large crowd had gathered for the dedication of the property and the unveiling of a sign proclaiming the intention to build a church there. The mission's first Sunday morning service followed on October 19 at nearby Greensboro Day School, with the newly arrived Kelly Brown leading the worshippers. By December, Brown informed deacons that Brandt Oaks had thirty-seven members.

The Together We Build campaign went into full swing in October and November 1986 with a series of special newsletters that described the goals of the program. The program's theme was Not Equal Gifts, but Equal Sacrifices. Articles were contributed by program director Al Lineberry Sr., "Trust Your Co-Pilot"; advance commitment director Fred Williams: "Not Just Another Fundraiser"; and spiritual emphasis director Seth Macon: "An Open Letter." Other articles described in detail how Together We Build would affect the life and work of the church, accompanied by photographs of needs such as ragged choir robes and dangerous congestion at the porte cochere entrance.

When program pledges were tallied after Thanksgiving, Dr. McEachern reported commitments amounting to \$1,850,000. By April 1987, the pledged total was still \$500,000 short of the goal. Project manager Virgil Mims told deacons in July that with only 80 percent of the program pledged, the anticipated projects would have to be sequenced so as not to run out of money by attempting to do everything at once.

One possible source of funding for the Brandt Oaks mission, at least, could be found in closing Central Chapel. After a ministry of more than twenty-five years, deacon chairman Kimsey Mann and Dr. McEachern explained to deacons at their meeting on May 4, 1987, that the mission was no longer deemed viable, citing the changing neighborhood surrounding it and the fact that the

majority of those who attended were being transported there from other parts of town. The hope was that closing the mission and selling the property would provide funds for Brandt Oaks (although by the time this was accomplished the next year, church finances were so precarious that a portion of the proceeds ended up being used to pay current expenses).

A few weeks later, on Sunday, July 28, 1987, Beulah Hodgkin recorded in her secretarial notebook, as she had countless times before, the weather report for Central Chapel: 56 degrees and sunny. This would be her final entry because this Sunday was the mission's last one. "I was at Central school [where the mission had first met] until the last day in Chapel," she wrote. "I miss[ed] 11 Sundays." There were fifty-five members and one visitor in attendance that morning. First Baptist had sponsored this mission, situated in a declining neighborhood on the edge of the city's central business district, since its organization in 1960. It was still too early to determine if the church's initiative in a prospering suburban neighborhood on the city's boundary would succeed; growth at that location was not accelerating as quickly as it had at earlier mission sites. But, controversy at the home church that autumn threatened to overwhelm efforts in northwestern Greensboro.

Now the crisis broke. After receiving a particularly discouraging financial report at the August 1987 deacon meeting, chairman Mann appointed an ad hoc committee to consider if there were problems with the spiritual well-being of the church that might be affecting financial support and, if so, what deacons should be doing to alleviate them. Dr. McEachern and chairman Mann would later learn of the committee's findings, but not before other momentous decisions had been reached. At the deacon meeting of September 25, 1987, shortly after Dr. McEachern presented the outgoing chairman with one of the last of the commemorative plates left from the 1959 centennial celebration, Al Lineberry Sr. was recognized as the representative of a group of former deacon chairmen to share a resolution to be presented at the church conference two days later. The resolution stated that in light of Dr. McEachern's extensive writing projects, commitments to the Sunday School Board, teaching engagements and revival commitments, the pastor should be granted a sabbatical beginning October 1 and lasting until March 31, 1988, "to reflect upon and carefully consider the call of the Lord for his future ministry and service." The fact that deacons were not allowed to discuss this resolution until after they voted to endorse it bode ill for the congregational consideration that followed in which little additional explanation was offered. Not surprisingly, confusion was rampant as members tried to discern what was happening behind the scenes.

Matters got worse before they got better. During the church year that began

in October 1987, deacons formally met twenty times. The ad hoc committee on spirituality that had been appointed in August sent a written survey to the members, and, at the deacon meeting on October 5, committee chairman John Hardy Jr. presented the collected opinions of 230 responses without any attempt to analyze what they might signify. The returned surveys expressed a bewilderingly wide array of opinions, many of them negative, which left deacons in a quandary about what to do with them. (A petition circulating among part of the congregation calling for Dr. McEachern's resignation further complicated the matter.) A long and difficult meeting of deacons and members of the congregation took place in the chapel the next week, with feelings of hurt and loss openly expressed and precious little explanation offered of the events that had led to McEachern's departure. Painfully clear was the fact that the original resolution calling for Dr. McEachern's sabbatical had failed to forestall division in the congregation. Indeed, the fact that it originated from a group of former deacon chairmen at a time of complaint over how decisions were made in the church may have exacerbated the situation.

As the year approached its end, deacon chairman Robert Caldwell received from Dr. McEachern his resignation, effective March 31, 1988. At the request of Alton and Betty McEachern, Caldwell informed the membership by letter and not with an announcement from the pulpit. The worst of the crisis had passed, although this was not immediately apparent, as deacons had to respond to a new petition calling for the resignation of several deacons and their officers. The congregation was left to figure out how to repair its brokenness. (Securing the assistance of Neal Chafin of the School of Pastoral Care at Baptist Hospital was one of the first steps immediately taken.) The last "Memo from McEachern" appeared in the newsletter of December 17, 1987, and simply quoted the first thirteen verses of 1 Corinthians 13: "And now I will show you the best way of all."

Despite the controversy the work of the church continued. Virgil Mims reported in November 1987 that he had received final drawings from the architect along with carpet samples and paint schemes for the Together We Build renovations, although he cautioned that eliminating moisture under the front steps of the building, correcting a poorly laid roof on the children's wing and replacing a leaking roof on the east wing's third floor were unexpected expenses.

The new year renewed hope that the future would be better. In January 1988, an interim pastor was called, and deacons began the process of forming a search committee. Dr. John Lawrence, recently retired as pastor of Forest Hills Baptist Church in Raleigh, came as interim pastor. He and his wife Laura quickly made Greensboro a home away from their retirement home in Winston-Salem. Dr.

Lawrence offered simple advice in a newsletter soon after his arrival: "Let us choose as our motto those words of Paul as recorded in Philippians 3:13, 'Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before I press on.'"

The challenging work of forming a pastor search committee in the midst of a distressed membership was taken up by deacons at their January 4 meeting. Deacons began with a list of 250 names that had been submitted by the congregation, hoping in the coming weeks to recommend fifteen individuals to serve on the committee. John Setchfield (who would lead the staff during this critical time) also brought to deacons a staff proposal for deacons and church members to covenant with one another to pray for the church for fifteen minutes every day for the next sixty days; eventually more than three hundred members formally agreed to do so. A new ad hoc committee, charged with reviewing the constitution and bylaws, was appointed. Brandt Oaks struggled to grow, as Kelly Brown reported to deacons in March that membership there had reached a plateau. Through it all, Together We Build finalized plans to renovate the Fellowship Hall during the summer months. One small step toward closure of a painful period in the church's history came at the end of March 1988 when Dr. McEachern was welcomed back to the church for recognition of his fourteen years as pastor.

In a time of unexpected events, few people in the church anticipated the difficulty of the work the pastor search committee was about to undertake. Deacons had defined criteria for the committee's makeup—a balance of age and gender were the most important considerations—as they worked through long lists of names in order to place a slate of fifteen before the congregation. On April 3, 1988, Easter Sunday, the congregation, after adding two additional members from the floor, commissioned the committee. The pastor search committee would meet frequently and continuously for the next twenty-two months, with a good part of the first year spent ascertaining how to help the congregation move through its grieving over the events of the past year to reach a point where it could look forward as one body to welcoming a new pastor.

Dr. Lawrence's health suddenly and unexpectedly began to fail, and he announced his resignation in April 1988. A month later deacon chairman Robert Caldwell announced that Dr. Jack R. Noffsinger had agreed to serve as interim pastor. Noffsinger had pastored Knollwood Baptist Church in Winston-Salem until his retirement at age seventy the previous January. Like an earlier generation's J. Clyde Turner, he was closely associated with only one church, coming to Knollwood in 1957 after Turner had been the interim pastor of this new mission church.

Regardless of conditions at First Baptist, politics in the Southern Baptist



Convention moved on relentlessly. Randall Lolley had resigned as president of Southeastern Seminary in October 1987 when he concluded he could not in good conscience carry out the directives of his trustees regarding his faculty and staff. The Home Mission Board had begun to deny aid to churches that called women as pastors; another policy prohibited the appointment of ordained women and divorced persons as missionaries. The historic doctrine of the priesthood of believers was being qualified by convention leaders in an attempt to cloak pastors with final authority in matters of scriptural interpretation. These issues were scrutinized by the ad hoc Southern Baptist Convention Awareness Committee chaired by deacon Lewis Boroughs, with a report presented to the congregation in November 1988. At issue was whether the congregation would agree to join the Southern Baptist Alliance, an early coalition of churches seeking a way to express their concern over the direction taken by the convention. Voting overwhelmingly and by written ballot, the congregation determined in December to join the Alliance. "We're in effect saying to the Southern Baptist Convention that we don't like the way things have been going," Boroughs said in an interview. "We are seeking a forum to indicate our displeasure." First Baptist was the first church in Greensboro to make this move, paying twenty-five hundred dollars (or one dollar per resident member) in dues for 1989.

The work of Together We Build proceeded apace, albeit in directions not originally intended. Unplanned exterior painting and the replacing of roofs again, this time over the sanctuary and activities building, required an expenditure of \$137,030, which was absorbed by the project, in part because Virgil Mims had voluntarily served in the role of general contractor. Nevertheless, more money was needed; the church approved a resolution in September to borrow up to \$275,000 to finish the renovations and to make final payment on the Brandt Oaks property. Mims reported to deacons in February 1989 that most of the work had been completed, excepting the painting of the steeple. Renovation of the sanctuary had been deferred, however; and when a new sanctuary renovation committee was organized by deacons in 1991, the final report of Together We Build showed a shortfall of \$47,500, which itself was a considerable achievement given the difficulties that beset the project from its outset.

The Brandt Oaks congregation was also planning to build a church facility. Having already called Kelly Brown as their full-time pastor, the mission now moved toward a groundbreaking ceremony on March 25, 1990, with plans for the members to move into their new building by the time of the mission's fourth anniversary in October. Construction of the sixty-eight hundred square-foot facility, with its 160-seat sanctuary, eleven classrooms, and offices and kitchen, was unlike any church mission project First Baptist had pursued. With blue-



Participants in the Brandt Oaks groundbreaking on March 25, 1990 are (from l. to r.) Jim Clontz, Becky Newcomb, Jack Swanson, Ronny Reynolds of the Baptist State Convention's Church Extension Department, Dennis Blackmon of the Piedmont Baptist Association, Bob Clegg, Director of Church Building and Planting for the Baptist State Convention, Carl Myatt, and Fred Binder.

prints drawn by architect and church member Carl Myatt, construction was undertaken by a series of volunteer teams coming from across the South and coordinated by deacon Jim Clontz, a professional builder who often led volunteer efforts in mission construction projects. The teams, beginning with sixty-five volunteers from Lithia Springs, Georgia, worked in six-day shifts, worshipping on Sunday before returning home. Their efforts reduced the cost of the project from an estimated \$448,000 to \$283,000. Like an old fashioned barn-raising, the work proceeded quickly and made possible a building dedication service on Sunday afternoon, October 21, 1990, the mission's fourth anniversary, for which Mike Queen was on hand as featured speaker.

After being chaired first by Jim Austell and then David Moore, the constitution and bylaws committee reported a draft of its work to the deacons in July 1989. Two areas of greatest change stood out: church organization and incorporation. Articles of incorporation replaced the old constitution and would establish a corporate form of church structure as a legal concept intended to limit individual liability and simplify the ownership and transfer of property. Church organization was modified in several ways. The office of moderator was created to preside at church conferences; a committee on committees would handle nominations for all church offices; and the committee structure was stream-

lined. In addition, the number of deacons was reduced by twelve to thirty-six and their terms changed from four to three years. The committee's proposed revisions represented the most significant restructuring of church polity since Judge York's efforts in 1967 and were unsettling enough to prompt after several congregation forums the addition of a statement to the preface of the bylaws that the changes had as their sole purpose the more orderly conduct of the affairs of the church: "We, therefore, solemnly declare that this is our only object in adopting the following bylaws." Further modifications that resulted from congregational discussions included mandating an annual church conference for September or October and clarifying how staff members were elected, employed, and terminated. To that end the personnel committee would maintain job descriptions for each church position while a policy manual would be created to handle day-to-day operations not described by the bylaws. The finance committee would also receive an annual review of the pastor from the newly-instituted pastor relations committee, which had included among its responsibilities providing "supportive counsel" to the pastor and his family. Finally, a year after the draft was produced, the congregation voted to adopt the new bylaws and articles of incorporation on July 15, 1990.

The church had something else new to accompany its bylaws: a pastor. On at least two occasions, the pastor search committee thought it was close to recommending a candidate to the church. Just as chairman Fred Williams prepared to announce the committee's first recommendation in March 1989, however, the candidate suddenly withdrew from consideration. Deacons applauded Williams the following May when he announced that the committee felt led to a second candidate, but in September the committee had to concede that the individual did not believe himself called to Greensboro and was withdrawing his name. "When are we going to recommend a pastor?" Williams asked in the newsletter for September 14, 1989. "Good question, and one for which we do not have an answer today. The only being who knows is God. We will keep working and praying, and you keep working and praying, and a leader for our congregation will emerge."

A leader emerged during the winter. The headline in the *Greensboro News and Record* on Monday, February 12, 1990, contained a name that was simultaneously surprising (the candidate after all had recently accepted another pastorate) and a natural fit: "Lolley to lead Greensboro First Baptist." After working for almost two years, the pastor search committee presented to the congregation Dr. W. Randall Lolley and his wife Lou at an unusually early morning reception on Sunday, February 11. (Scheduling a meeting for 7:30 in the morning was intended to allow Lolley time to return to Raleigh and handle the delicate task of

personally announcing his resignation at the morning worship service of the church he was then pastoring.) A congregation of approximately eleven hundred persons gathered for worship a little later and overwhelmingly approved his calling with a show of hands. "I would call it unanimous," Williams concluded. "I didn't see one single hand in a negative, which is very unusual."

Lolley had traveled a long and lately difficult road since his days as assistant pastor at the church in 1958-59. At thirty he had been one of the youngest pastors ever called by First Baptist Church of Winston-Salem where he went in 1962. Lolley served there until the trustees of Southeastern Seminary, where he had completed his doctor of theology in 1964, elected him president in May 1974. When he retired from Southeastern in October 1987, amid growing controversy over the control and direction of the convention's seminaries, he returned to the pastorate and accepted the senior post at First Baptist Church of Raleigh in May 1988. He quickly learned, however, of the existence of "a genuine connection between proximity and pain," as the church was located only a few miles from the seminary in Wake Forest and included among its members faculty and staff battered in the upheaval at Southeastern. "It was like going to the graveyard everyday, emotionally," Lolley said of his experience. "I went to Raleigh planning to stay, but it just didn't work out. I felt very badly about it, and I hope they'll understand one day."

Lolley had talked with Williams "scores of times earlier about other persons, persons I thought they should look at, persons they were looking at and wanting my input." Now, after unforeseen twists and turns, the congregation prepared to hear its new pastor preach the sermon, "Wanted: An Open Tomb on Sunday," on Easter Sunday, April 15, 1990. The sanctuary, with more than thirteen hundred worshippers, was filled as it had not been for some time. Two weeks later, on Sunday, April 29, Dr. Lolley was formally installed. The service began with the familiar presence of S. C. Ray giving the call to worship and Claud Bowen offering the invocation. Formal greetings followed from Jack Swanson, chairman of the deacons; John Setchfield, on behalf of the church staff; Dr. Michael Jamison, president of the Greensboro Ministers Fellowship; and Dr. Dennis Blackmon, director of missions for the Piedmont Baptist Association. Representing the youth, Bill Stanfield read Ephesians 4:1-16: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (verses that had been used before and would be used again upon the church's pastor installation). Dr. Noffsinger delivered the charge to the congregation, followed by the hymn, "O God, Our Help in Ages Past." Peggy Haymes was the associate pastor of College Park Baptist Church (one of First Baptist's early mission efforts) and a student at Southeastern Sem-

inary and member of First Baptist Church in Winston-Salem during Lolley's tenure at those places, and she read 1 Corinthians 12:27-31: "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." The charge to the pastor came from Dr. Gene Watterson, president of the Baptist State Convention, after which Lolley and the congregation spoke words of covenant to one another. With the choral benediction, "O Love, That Wilt Not Let Me Go," the church had installed the fourth pastor it had known in the twentieth century.

Although older and more experienced than his predecessors had been in their first days in Greensboro, Lolley brought an exuberance that did not fail to excite. "Give your best, and nothing less than your best, of your talents, times, witness and money," advised the departing Dr. Noffsinger, whose interim leadership showed that he also knew something about being energetic, "that First Baptist, Greensboro with its exemplary past may build an even more gracious and ministering future."

# 12

## Building on Our Heritage

*Reaching for God's Tomorrow; Building on Our Heritage*

—Church motto

Although his easygoing, down-home nature belied it, Randall Lolley was a respected and influential Baptist leader of national stature when he returned to Greensboro in 1990. During his six years as pastor, Lolley helped lead moderate Baptists from across the South into forums where their voices would be heard. At the church he also empowered the congregation to move past the pain it had endured in order to plan its own future. From the time he first met with the pastor search committee and pulled out a scrap of paper on which he had noted what he wanted to talk about to the series of breakfast meetings he held with members of the congregation during his first year as pastor, Lolley asked a simple question that quickly became his mantra: “What is job one?”

For Lolley, who seemed to be able to work simultaneously on more than one “job one” tasks, denominational affairs assumed an important role. He was in Atlanta in August 1990 as one of eleven board members helping to establish the Baptist Cooperative Missions Program. More than three hundred individuals from North Carolina alone joined an assembly of almost three thousand moderate Baptists to take part in a meeting that would create an umbrella organization to provide their churches with alternative channels for allocating funds and sponsoring fellowship agencies for mission work. Lolley spoke to the assembly on Friday, August 26, 1990. Drawing on examples of how Christ scorned those who condemned others based on their understanding of Scripture, Lolley urged moderates to take higher ground in their disagreements with their critics. “He drew the crowd on,” according to one newspaper account, “winning applause for some of his points, and after he’d finished, a man in the audience leaned over and asked his neighbor, ‘Where can we get copies of these speeches?’”

By the spring of 1991, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) was a reality, and Lolley spent the evening service at First Baptist on May 19 discussing its formation with the congregation and sharing "An Address to the Public" by Dr. Walter B. Shurden of Mercer University, which explained the reasons for such a fellowship. Two years later, in 1993, Dr. Keith Parks, who had been appointed CBF's director of Global Missions after being forced out of the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign Mission Board a year earlier, declared to supporters of CBF that they should put their troubles with the convention behind them and work to send missionaries to nations of the former Communist bloc. Parks spoke at the Fellowship's first state meeting in North Carolina, which convened at the church in March with an assembly of more than eight hundred participants. When North Carolina Baptists met in Wait Chapel on the Wake Forest University campus the following year to organize the state chapter of CBF, their numbers included members of the church. Controversy with the Southern Baptist Convention and eventually the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina would continue, but the church had begun to reapportion how it allocated missions giving. The WMU, for example, with the approval of the congregation, provided alternatives to the convention's Annie Armstrong and Lottie Moon Offerings beginning in 1992 as the church sought ways to align itself with like-minded Baptists working increasingly through new agencies and partnerships.

"I have a dream," Lolley wrote in the church newsletter for June 27, 1991, "that every member of our First Baptist family become a 'hands-on' missionary somewhere/somewhat within the next five years." One such opportunity presented itself to the congregation when Millard Fuller, founder of Habitat for Humanity, preached at the church on January 26, 1992. With the theme, "Building Houses in Partnership with God's People in Need," Habitat had completed twenty-seven houses in Greensboro since 1987. Now the newsletter for April 9, 1992, announced plans to build a "Baptist House" at Partnership Court in the northeastern section of the city, with groundbreaking for this cooperative effort that included white and black Baptist congregations set for later in the month. Through the summer, until the dedication of the house in September, members of the congregation wielded tools and building materials and prepared lunches for construction crews.

The field for hands-on missions work ranged from nearby, as with the construction in 1993 of a church for Vietnamese refugees under the auspices of the Piedmont Baptist Association, to places as far away as eastern Europe and Latin America and involved growing numbers of church members who heeded Lolley's challenge to help with building projects, Vacation Bible Schools, and med-



Randall Lolley (r.) wears his favored jumpsuit while working at the Vietnamese Baptist Church of Greensboro in 1993. Under Lolley's leadership, missions activity became less "checkbook" and more "hands-on" in its orientation.

ical and dental clinics. The "new missions" may have been forced by necessity as old ways of doing what Lolley described as "checkbook missions" were left behind, but they also required the willingness of pastoral and lay leaders in order to establish themselves. Their continuation to the present constitutes one of the most important, and certainly one of the most visible, legacies of this decade.

Lolley shared with his predecessor Claud Bowen a gift for pastoral care. He was called upon to show that care in December 1990, for both a family and a congregation, upon the death of the eighty-two-year-old Dr. Bowen. "For to me, living in Christ and dying is gain," Dr. Lolley read from Philippians 1:21–24 to a large congregation gathered in the sanctuary for the funeral. Perhaps his closest associate, Dr. S. C. Ray, gave the eulogy, "Meet This Man in Christ," and Dr. Lolley captured Bowen's essence in his homage, "A Gentle Giant—Herald of Christ." With the diaconate serving as honorary pallbearers, several of those who had long worked with Bowen provided the last honor as his pallbearers: Lewis Boroughs, Mike Coughlin, John Hancock, Albert S. Lineberry Sr., Seth Macon, J. Franklin Paris, William Westphal Sr., and Fred Williams. Louise Bowen survived her husband by eight years, until her death at age eighty-five on May 29, 1998.

A more joyous event helped to close the year, as Jack Heath's twenty-two years of ministry were celebrated upon his retirement. (Heath was retiring only



in the sense that he was leaving this work, as he was about to begin a hospital residency in order to complete accreditation for his calling to institutional chaplaincy.) In January 1991, the church called its own Sandra Canipe, who had been working for some time at another church, to direct the preschool ministries program. One more addition to the staff occurred in May, when Ben Vogler with his wife Amy came to Greensboro from Hayes Barton Baptist Church in Raleigh to be the associate pastor for youth and college students.

There were other comings and goings: administrator Joe Ratliff retired at the end of 1991, having come to the church fourteen years earlier, and his place was taken by Jack Swanson. After formative years at Brandt Oaks, Kelly Brown left in 1993 to pastor his wife Donna's home church in Atmore, Alabama. John Setchfield, who had led the staff during a tumultuous time of transition at the end of Dr. McEachern's pastorate, resigned in 1994 to be the pastor at Pleasant Gardens Baptist Church in Marion, North Carolina. Charles Qualls with his wife Elizabeth came to Greensboro to begin a four-and-a-half year stint as the associate pastor for Christian education. The church's week-day preschool program, which had benefited from the expertise of a veteran staff, said good-bye to Roberta Hartgrove, who retired from teaching after twenty-seven years of service at the end of the 1994 school year. A link that went farther back to the past was lost at the beginning of 1992, when Ethel Lee, longtime church hostess who moved to Greensboro from Texas with her husband O. E. Lee in 1921 when he was called to be Dr. Turner's assistant, died at the Baptist Retirement Home-Health Care Center in Winston-Salem. Ethel Lee was ninety-five years old.

A significant addition to the ministerial staff resulted when Dr. Stephen J. Pressley began work as associate pastor in January 1993. A native North Carolinian and graduate of Southern Seminary, Pressley with wife Catherine and daughters Cecilia and Lauren came to Greensboro from Beverly Hills Baptist Church in Asheville, where Steve had served as pastor for ten years. An energetic forty-four-year-old, he and Catherine (who held an MA in religious education from Southern Seminary) would be noted for their work with a variety of ministries within the church, including children (where Catherine's musical training was utilized), senior adults, and pastoral care.

Just as the church's understanding of missions was changing, so were the faces of those involved in overseas missionary work. Clara Brincefield returned to Nashville for her final furlough in April 1995. She closed her career by serving as missionary-in-residence at Belmont University; upon her retirement as emeritus missionary of the Foreign Mission Board, she married Dr. Leslie M. Huff. Also returning home were Ray and Evelyn Benfield, who had worked at

various posts in Europe for fifteen years. Completing these retirements was Sue Andrews, a missionary for ten years in Burkina Faso.

If redefining denominational relations and missions work were two important undertakings of these years, systematic planning for the church's future was the third. In the newsletter for October 8, 1992, Dr. Lolley wrote, "One of the most significant reports to come to the congregation during my pastorate appears in this issue of *First Baptist News*." Lolley was describing the summary page of the detailed and comprehensive *Five-Year Plan: 1993-98*. Two and a half years in the making, the plan was the result of a mammoth congregational undertaking working under the leadership of the long-range planning committee chaired by D. C. Thompson. Five "Strategic Task Forces," composed of dozens of church members, developed goals and action plans around lengthy sets of objectives. Over a hundred church members participated in a planning retreat in May 1992, and through the following summer deacons attempted to visit every member of the congregation seeking input for the process.

The report was presented to the congregation on Sunday, October 11, with the members voting the following Sunday to endorse it as a framework for future planning. The report was nothing if not ambitious, as even a sampling suggests. Under the objective of "Evangelism and Ministries," the goal of initiating a day care/after-school care program was listed. For "Missions Opportunities," one goal stated the intention of developing and promoting innovative, hands-on missions opportunities in a sufficient number and variety that a significant part of the congregation could participate. Planning more flexible worship services in order to enrich the spiritual life of the congregation was part of the objective, "Energize Our Membership." For "Sunday School and Education," one aim was to pair at least ten Sunday School classes with each other across generational lines. Improving and maintaining the Christian Activities Building was listed under the objective "Facilities." Even if the implementation of some goals did not always work out as intended, the planning process had the salutary effect of focusing the congregation on its future. The congregation would later try different planning processes, but the message had been clearly made that churches no longer thrived simply because people walked through their doors looking to become members.

Behind the work of long-range planning lay Dr. Lolley's understanding of how churches had evolved during his decades of ministry. For Lolley each church had its own distinctive story that "a wise minister" sought to learn. "In learning that story," he said in a 1995 interview for *Verbatim*, a publication of the North Carolina Baptist Hospital's Department of Pastoral Care, "among the things you seek out is the profile of the way the church makes decisions and the

way the church shares power.” Lolley went on to reflect at length on how the nature of his work as pastor was different in the nineties from what it had been in the sixties. He described the church of the nineties as “neo-traditional” and as one that wanted more expository preaching based on biblical texts. The church of the nineties was one that sought “an idiom of worship” that blended the outlooks of old and young, and that insisted on an energetic sense of purpose for its work. Caring for older congregants had grown in importance, and the pressures and demands on families of all ages were such that even a simple pastoral visit now required scheduling. Addressing the ills that beset the broader community in which the church was situated required cooperation with service agencies, awareness groups, and leaders outside the church. For the church to be effectively engaged, leaders needed to be shared within its ranks. “Lay-led congregations, in my judgment, are always stronger. I just don’t buy into pastoral authority. I don’t think it’s right. The last time Jesus was seen, he was a shepherd of sheep, not a cowboy rounding up cattle.” Lolley’s interview offered a view not only of his life, but of his practice as well.

The work that produced the *Five-Year Plan* typified Lolley’s ministry approach. “Be a catalyst, an equipper, let the process flow,” he said in the *Verbatim* interview, “but don’t contravene it and don’t torpedo it and don’t sabotage it to get your way, and it will work. It’s not the shortest road and it’s not the quickest road, but it’s overwhelmingly, in my judgment, the best.” Lolley must have had confidence in how the process was flowing at First Baptist because the *Five-Year Plan* he had helped equip the congregation to craft would outlast his tenure. In January 1996 he made clear in a letter to the congregation that he intended to retire in the not-too-distant future as several significant milestones converged. Sunday, January 28, 1996, Lolley observed, would mark the forty-fifth anniversary of his ordination. As of April 15, he would have served six years as the church’s pastor, and his sixty-fifth birthday would arrive on June 2. “All these dates add up to the fact that I have some plans to make and share with you. Thus . . . I will be sharing with all of you my plans for you to get some fresh legs and for me to get some things caught up after 45 years in ministry.” Lolley announced on that Sunday his retirement, effective December 31, 1996, with him actually leaving the pulpit at the end of September. With characteristic aplomb, he afterward commented that his decision to leave was “no big deal.” He urged deacons to begin immediately the process of finding his successor and to forestall if possible a lengthy interim. “I hope my successor enjoys the freedom and support that had been showered on me,” he concluded. Deacon chairman Lois Edinger probably captured the sense of the congregation with her reaction: “Deep down, we feel like we haven’t had him long enough. But I think you lis-

ten to God's call, and God's call comes at various times and in various ways. I'm sure that God has other things that he will call Randall to do."

Deacons wasted no time. Within a week they had set criteria for choosing members of a search committee, with nominations sought from the congregation to fill ten positions. They ended up with a long list of names to sort, as 124 persons suggested 285 names. Nonetheless, a slate was presented for election by the members on Sunday, March 3, 1996.

One of the first tasks undertaken by the newly elected pastor search committee, chaired by Jack Swanson, was to survey the congregation on its attitudes about what the church should be. Although distinctions in responses could sometimes be drawn between those who preferred either the 8:45 or 11 a.m. Sunday morning service, several trends among the 409 completed surveys were clear. Most people thought the church should increase in growth at least "moderately" (64 percent), with some responding that their vision was for the church to grow "significantly" (28 percent). Regarding the makeup of the congregation, 43 percent wanted to see the median age closer to forty years, while 37 percent preferred the age to be fifty-nine. In reality, as Lolley reported to deacons on August 5, 1996, the median age of resident members was fifty-eight years. The median age of new members over the previous thirty years was thirty-one. Couples under the age of forty-five were seen as one of the most desirable demographic groups.

The committee was also given some direction in the qualities to seek in a new pastor. Preaching ability was overwhelmingly the first choice among respondents, with being a Bible teacher, demonstrating motivational and leadership ability, and having an effective pastoral ministry following in that order. Perhaps most revealing of how drastically denominational affairs were changing, being a leader in the denomination fell distantly behind the other qualities listed. Dr. Lolley must have understood well the desirability of congregational involvement, as over 60 percent of the respondents favored congregational participation in worship services. Community leadership was considered important by nearly half of the survey participants but, only when expressed in terms of offering fellowship and support groups like divorce recovery, elder care, community center activities, or premarital counseling; social activism appeared to hold no charm.

Formal recognition of Randall Lolley's many years of ministry service and of his careful shepherding of the congregation came at the end of the 11:00 worship service on Sunday, September 29, 1996. A gift committee composed of Hal Koger, Al Lineberry Sr., and Fred Williams announced on behalf of the church the establishment of the W. Randall Lolley Endowed Fund for Christian Reli-

gious Purposes. Dr. Lolley's help would be solicited in determining exactly how the fund was to be used and his input would be sought whenever requests for disbursement were made, but the idea of a sizable endowment for such purposes was new to the church and provided a fitting memorial to an individual who had worked so tirelessly in a variety of forums on behalf of the religious education of others. The ceremony, however, was not without a note of levity. Somehow the secretary of the pastor search committee that had recommended Lolley's calling had kept among reams of minutes the slip of paper with the notes Lolley had used for his interview with the committee, beginning with the query, "What is job one?" That page, now framed, was returned to the pastor who never tired of asking the question. Although in the years to come Randall and Lou continued to maintain ties with First Baptist, one return visit was particularly meaningful: on Sunday, September 12, 1999, the couple was on hand for the unveiling of Randall's portrait.

The church welcomed as interim pastor Dr. Doug Aldrich, who came to Greensboro with his wife Edna Lou on February 1, 1997. Aldrich had recently completed a one-year appointment as interim at First Baptist Church of Raleigh (Dr. Lolley's church after he left Southeastern Seminary) and before then had served pastorates at Forest Hills Baptist Church in Raleigh and First Baptist Church in Gastonia. With the pastor search committee at work before Lolley's departure, Dr. Aldrich's interim would be a short one.

The newspaper headline announced, "First Baptist Calls Young New Pastor." Culminating a sixteen-month process, the pastor search committee on Sunday, May 25, 1997, officially recommended that Dr. Kenneth W. Massey, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, be called as the church's new pastor. A native of Beaumont, Texas, and a graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern Seminary, Massey had served in Waco for seven years at a church situated in a declining neighborhood that, at the time he left, was revitalized and attracting growing numbers of younger adults. Added to his ability to draw young people into the congregation was the appeal of his energizing preaching. "Then it was just a case of getting to know him, and the more we got to know him, the more we felt it was what the Lord wanted," according to chairman Jack Swanson. Like Turner, Bowen, and McEachern when they first came to Greensboro, Massey was young; he was forty-two-years-old when the church called him.

Massey met with approximately four hundred members of the congregation on Friday evening, May 23. "I like him very much," commented Seth Macon, who had recently become a fifty-year member of the church. "He's young and intelligent and aggressive, and I think he'll really be a good leader." On the fol-

lowing Sunday the congregation voted unanimously to extend a call to Massey. His first day on the job was Wednesday, July 16, at which time the church gathered for an ice-cream social and the opportunity to greet Ken, his wife Sara, and their children Kristen, Aaron, and Adreanna.

The covenanting service on Sunday afternoon, September 7, 1997, in which Dr. Massey was installed as pastor followed a familiar pattern, as S. C. Ray would have recognized, this being the third one in which he took part. For the call to worship, deacon Keith Gammons read from Psalm 27, followed by the invocation, given by deacon Judyth White. Dr. Ray read the Old Testament Scripture from Ezekiel 37:1–10: “He said to me, ‘Mortal, can these bones live?’” After singing “God of Grace and God of Glory,” the Massey family was formally presented to the congregation by pastor search committee chairman Jack Swanson. Words of welcome followed: from the church, by deacon chairman Larry Putnam; from the staff, by Dr. Pressley; from the churches in the community, by Dr. Jerold Shetler of First Presbyterian Church; from the Piedmont Baptist Association, by missions director Dr. Dennis Blackmon; and from the city, by Mayor Carolyn Allen. Deacon Hazel Fisher read the charge to the pastor, after which a prayer of covenanting was offered by Sunday School director Dr. Scott Culclasure. The congregational hymn “We Are Called to Be God’s People” was echoed in the New Testament Scripture from Ephesians that had also been heard at previous installations; this time the passage was read by Lauren Pressley. The sermon was preached by Dr. Cecil Sherman, professor in residence at the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. After the congregation sang “O God, Our Help in Ages Past,” Dr. Lois Edinger read the benediction from Ephesians 3:20–21. The service was graced with music by the Sanctuary Choir, New Spirit (a young adult ensemble), soloist Joye Brannon, and musicians Terri Battle, Bonnie Bach, and Billy Summers. A long and fruitful relationship between pastor and people had been inaugurated. The next few years would see old issues come to resolution and new ones initiated.

Because it had been slow to grow in its early days, the Brandt Oaks mission lingered in a halfway existence in which it had not quite reached independence. In 1999, however, a new covenant agreement was proposed by a joint Brandt Oaks and First Baptist committee chaired by deacon Charlie Ripley. Under the proposal, which was accepted by the congregation on July 18, 1999, a portion of the 12.285 acre parcel of land would be sold (as had been intended when the lot was purchased more than a decade earlier) to help the mission achieve financial self-sufficiency. Once an understanding about the use of the remaining land was reached, Brandt Oaks Baptist Church was ready for its constitution, which occurred, appropriately enough, on July 4, 1999.



The Korean mission church represents a new kind of “church-start” for First Baptist. In this 2003 photograph, pastor Moses Yu is kneeling (left) on the front row.

Mission efforts at Lawndale and Hunter Hills had benefited from the financial support of the Carter Trust Fund, established in 1957. The purpose of the fund was to support Baptist mission efforts in Guilford County, and it retained its importance in later undertakings such as Brandt Oaks. Now it would be put to a new kind of mission, one that had not previously been attempted by the church. After conversation with representatives of the Baptist State Convention in the summer of 1998, Ken Massey and Steve Pressley presented to the diaconate early in 1999 the idea of sponsoring a Korean Baptist Mission in Greensboro. A Korean pastor, Moses Yu, was already available, having moved to Greensboro from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and presently leading Bible studies in his home. With the church’s blessing, a group of thirty-three Koreans had gathered with Yu for worship in the Chapel on January 3, 1999. Now, in an enterprise that involved the Baptist State Convention, the Piedmont Baptist Association, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the church agreed in February 1999 to sponsor the Korean mission, thanks in large measure to the efforts of church administrator Tom Smith and deacon Charlie Ripley. Wilbur Carter of the Southern Life Insurance Company may never have met a Korean, but the legacy he left enabled his church to continue its ministry in a world that was different from the one he had known.



Pictured during missions work at the beginning of the twenty-first century are Delmas Bearden (left) at a church construction site in Aiken, South Carolina, and Dr. Richard Beavers (right) at a medical and dental trip to Temuco, Chile. Both photographs were taken in 2002.

In fact, the old ways of doing missions—either overseas by commissioning missionaries and then financially supporting their efforts or at home by helping organize new missions—looked different as the new century began. A sampling from 2005 offers an idea of the variety of activities now being undertaken. That summer the church sent a team of volunteers to Ukraine to work in Kiev’s “Village of Hope” preparing for the arrival of that organization’s first foster family. Much closer to home, a construction crew traveled to Gap Creek Baptist Church near Greenville, South Carolina, to erect a new building. A Vacation Bible School was hosted in Greensboro’s Rosewood Park, located in an ethnically diverse neighborhood that had originally been one of the villages surrounding Proximity Cotton Mills. Finally, high school students and adults traveled to Toluca, Mexico, to lead three Vacation Bible Schools, as church youth were taught about missions by participating in them.



Maintaining a historic Baptist distinctiveness required navigating around two shoals: extricating the church from increasingly toxic debates within the Southern Baptist Convention on issues such as the role of women and recognizing that newcomers to the church may be less likely than ever to share a Baptist background and therefore be unaware of the importance of historic principles such as the separation of church and state. Revisions to the “Baptist Faith and Message” in 1998 and 2000, for example, challenged the church’s understandings of issues such as the authority of the Scriptures, the church, the nature of evangelism and missions, education, religious liberty, and the family. After extensive study of these changes, the congregation voted in May 2001 to reaffirm and retain the 1963 version of “Baptist Faith and Message,” a document it had long incorporated into its bylaws. The effect on missionaries of refusing to accept the revisions was evident by the time of the 2002 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis, as those individuals who declined to sign their support of the 2000 version of the “Baptist Faith and Message” were being forced off the mission field.

At the turn of the new century, the Baptist State Convention was increasingly the scene of struggles between factions labeled “conservative” and “moderate” that paralleled divisions at the national level. The organization of Mainstream Baptists of North Carolina in 2001 offered one last opportunity for moderates to prevent fundamentalists from taking control of the state convention. Hoping to preserve principles such as the autonomy of the local church, the organization (which did not enjoy the support of the many moderates in the state who had turned away from further involvement in convention politics) endorsed a slate of candidates who expressed their desire of finding a way to repair the growing rift with conservatives. Together with Dr. David M. Hughes, pastor of First Baptist Church of Winston-Salem (and S. C. Ray’s son-in-law), and Raymond Earp, past president of North Carolina Baptist Men, Ken Massey agreed to add his name as a candidate for second vice president. When the convention met in October, however, the ticket was decisively beaten.

With that defeat a long era came to an end. The Baptist church in Greensboro was one of many early fruits of the Baptist State Convention working with local bodies of believers. Throughout the twentieth century it was assumed that any pastor called to First Baptist would also be at the forefront of leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention. Now, early in the twenty-first century, it became difficult to imagine how such conditions could ever again exist. (The church had not even sent messengers to the annual sessions of the Southern Baptist Convention since 1991.) The fact that many Protestant denominations experienced a similar fracturing of denominational polity (and for reasons that

went beyond doctrinal differences to include greater interest in smaller, more fluid networks of believers) did not make less wrenching for many members the transition to new forms of cooperative enterprises. Nevertheless, the changes were unavoidable.

At a Wednesday evening church conference on September 15, 2004, members of the congregation voted overwhelmingly to no longer align the church with any Baptist denomination, determining that the church would now be styled an autonomous "Missionary Baptist Church," just as it had been at its constitution in 1859. Without fanfare First Baptist had broken its ties with the Southern Baptist Convention. "We will no longer be identified by or limited by any single denominational group or title," Dr. Massey declared. "It's more work, but it's better for us." Affiliation would be maintained with the Baptist State Convention and the Piedmont Baptist Association. "We will work with those groups as long as they do not try to dictate to us or speak for us." Massey made the message clear: "If you want to know what First Baptist is you're going to have to come see us." Those who did would witness Baptists "discovering that smaller, freer, more flexible and efficient organizations do missions and ministry without the encumbrance of politics, conflict and homeostasis you find in bulky Baptist bureaucracies," as Massey observed. "National 'brand loyalty' is being replaced by a local mission loyalty."

Forging a strong ministry team to work with Massey and Pressley was an important task in order for church work to be more family friendly and hands-on. With Joye Brannon's retirement the church took the opportunity to focus on the role of music from worship to children's ministry, which led in October 1998 to calling Doug and Terri Vancil as a team to be associate and assistant pastors for music. The couple moved to Greensboro from Monroe Baptist Church in Monroe, North Carolina, with their two children, Rozanna and Taylor. Two years later, in December 2000, the church met its new associate pastor for youth: Steve Cothran, a graduate of Furman University and Southern Seminary. Cothran and his wife Nancy also brought children to the church—Marina, Raleigh, and Robyn. And in October 2001, the church tried the idea of combining education and mission ministries by calling David Chism, pastor of Capital City Baptist Church in Mexico City, to fill this role. David and his wife Melissa, with two grown children, came to Greensboro with Hannah, their youngest. Symbolizing their commitment to work as a team, the staff crafted and signed a covenant that modeled for the congregation how to foster cooperation and resolve conflict.

Drivers along Friendly Avenue in the summer of 1999 would have seen an unusual sight at the church: the steeple was hidden in scaffolding for its first restoration in forty-seven years. A facility that had served so well the needs of

a congregation for nearly a half century was itself in need of renovation in order to continue to serve a changing church. Created by the diaconate on August 16, 1998, the Facilities Master Plan Task Force was charged with examining and reporting on three areas: greeting space and accessibility from the parking lot; sanctuary renovation; and the conversion of the Christian Activities Building into a Family Life Center. Chairman Ken Tutterow was ready to bring his committee's report and recommendations in the spring of 2000. The report was intentionally comprehensive and therefore ambitious, but one of the first decisions taken by the congregation was to adopt it as the guide for future renovation and construction. (Future phases of the Master Facilities Plan included adding child and elder care facilities to the Family Life Center, reorienting the parking lot, reconfiguring heating and cooling zones, building a new entrance on Mendenhall Street to the children's wing, renovating the chapel, expanding the space behind the parlor and the pastor's office, moving church offices to space across from the chapel, and modifying part of the Sunday School space.)

Renovating the Christian Activities Building was the most extensive of the projects proposed in the report because it involved relocating the kitchen to there and creating a space that would allow for both fellowship and recreation. The cost, including construction of an enclosed connecting passage with the main building, was estimated to be \$3,152,000. (Moving the kitchen would relieve the nearly insoluble problem of providing it with adequate space in the main building and would allow the existing fellowship hall to be converted into additional Sunday School space.) Sanctuary renovations, estimating to cost \$2,117,000, included a wide array of alterations: lowering and extending the platform made its own theological statement about worship while also allowing for greater flexibility in programming; existing pews would be refinished and the seating plan reconfigured; the choir would be expanded; a new organ would be built; the room's acoustics addressed (including the removal of the proscenium arch); floor coverings replaced; shutters added; and the room repainted in an updated color scheme. All in all, the intent was to create a space possessing a brighter, airier feel that could accommodate a variety of worship settings. But accessing the sanctuary and the different levels of the church required reconfiguring the entrance to the building from the parking lot, long a difficulty because of the entrance's narrowness and stairways. The concept of a greeting space that extended out onto a raised portion of the parking lot would ease congestion, replace stairways with a smaller number of broad steps and ramps accessible to wheelchairs, and provide space for the informal fellowship that was part of any gathering at the church. An elevator installed at this end of the building also allowed access to the other levels of the building.

The church contracted Carl Myatt to prepare development and construction documents and agreed to engage Resource Services, Inc., to lead a capital stewardship campaign. "For the faith we received we pass on to others" was the theme of the "Heritage and Hope" campaign that, by the end of 2000, had raised \$3,825,000 in pledges to be paid over three years. This was enough to undertake the sanctuary renovations (which had received only modest treatment during the Together We Build project) and the greeting room and improved accessibility projects (with the Family Life Center deferred). Once work began in earnest, the congregation met in the Christian Activities Building, taking opportunities whenever possible to peek into a sanctuary that had become a construction zone unlike anything witnessed there in fifty years. But the dust eventually settled, and on Sunday afternoon, May 5, 2002, the church gathered for an open house to inspect the renovations and improvements to the building. A Baldwin grand piano had received over four hundred hours of restoration work by John Foy Piano Restorations, Inc., and was dedicated in a concert that followed the open house by Ronald Boud, retired professor of church music at Southern Seminary, protégé of Don Hustad, and professor of music and university organist at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee.

The renovated facilities were dedicated at "A Conversation of Memory" observance on Sunday evening, June 2, 2002, using an order of service that paralleled the church's original constitution in 1859. The old covenant was read, the hymn "Amazing Grace" was sung, and, as the charge to the church, a panel discussion featured several speakers including Dr. Lois Edinger, "A Church's Beginnings"; Moody Stroud, "A People Remembered"; Margaret Wilson, "A Family's Role"; Robert Caldwell, "A Baptist Growing Up"; and S. C. Ray, "A Minister's Perspective." Dr. Pressley read the 1904 letter Dr. James B. Richardson wrote to W. W. Rowe about his pastorate in the 1870s. A prayer of thanksgiving followed, after which the congregation sang "The Church's One Foundation." This season of dedication was completed the next year when, on August 3, 2003, organist Matt Curlee, who had grown up in the church, began a recital on the newly built Schantz organ with J. S. Bach's "Toccatina in F major, BWV 540."

In the first decade of the new century, attention also was paid to the bylaws to ensure that they reflected congregational values and practices. As the church became more intentional in determining how its missions offerings were appropriated, for example, the Great Commission fund committee, responsible for recommending how to spend funds for evangelism, outreach, and missions work, was added to the list of standing committees. The finance committee was mandated not to exceed the total amount of giving in the twelve months ending in September in proposing a unified church budget for the following fiscal



Associate Pastor Dr. Steve Pressley visits with the Shaugh family that participated in the building of their Habitat house in Ghor al Safi, Jordan, in January 2008. Pressley led a team of church volunteers in this project to an ancient land where Christians are a small minority.

year. The church defined itself as an autonomous, missionary Baptist church, free to enter into relationships with other bodies so long as they remained free, faithful, and mutually edifying. The change that perhaps would have struck the generation of Judge York most was the drastic reduction in the number of standing committees, replaced by a new article describing a “team ministry” approach, based on the biblical teachings about spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12.

Being both an eyewitness and a participant in the events of recent years make it nearly impossible for this historian to keep the perspective that constitutes the profession’s pride. For every person or event mentioned, others are perhaps unfairly overlooked, so crowded is the field of vision at such close range. One can only hope that what has been sketched in these pages will in some future history be considered more comprehensively. So the story stops here before coming to its conclusion, which, for a living and active church, is how it should be.

In the midst of so much change, which shows no sign of abating, just as the culture that surrounds the church continues to change, it can be hard to dis-



The church's future is represented by youth choir members at Park Street Church in Boston, at the beginning of a week of concerts and music camps with area churches on June 28, 2008.

cern the presence of the past. Is, then, a sesquicentennial too long a period to hope for continuity? Surely not if the experiences of the early church as recorded in the New Testament continue to teach today's generation of believers; a century and a half of more recent history is not too distant a time to hear what the past might say to us. The church's forerunners knew deprivation and the contempt of others when they came to Greensboro; they experienced discouragement and setback; they practiced patience and perseverance; they shared in the satisfaction of work faithfully done. Looking backward across the years, one is struck by how fixedly these Christian brothers and sisters looked to a future they could only dimly perceive. As we strive to emulate the urgency of their commitment in ways that meet the needs of our time, surely we can draw comfort in recognizing their presence among us still.

# Afterword

By Dr. Ken Massey, Pastor

*Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die; but God will surely come to you, and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. So Joseph made the Israelites swear, saying, "When God comes to you, you shall carry up my bones from here. —Genesis 50:24–25*

*The Israelites went up out of the land of Egypt. . . . And Moses took with him the bones of Joseph who had required a solemn oath of the Israelites. —Exodus 13:19*

**N**o matter where we go, we always take some of the past with us. Some churches and people give out and give up on the long journey of faith because they are carrying the enormous weight of unresolved issues and injuries. Other churches and people find the grace and courage to travel lighter, to carry into God's future only the best of their past. The story of Joseph's bones gives us some wisdom for the journey.

Every generation of faith seeks to make their way to the promises of God. Each generation struggles to leave the captivity of imposed beliefs and practices. At their best those so liberated will bring with them what is truly valuable from the past.

They will bring symbols of God's providence. Joseph's bones symbolized the divine intervention that saved Israel from starvation. New generations will bring a few cherished symbols of faith into the future, but like Israel they will leave most of the "bones" behind. They want to make new memories and new rituals that embody their own journey of faith.

They will bring some promises. The Israelites who left Egypt honored a promise that was made to Joseph, and it became their promise. Each believing generation attempts to honor the promises made by the first disciples and to make those promises their own. In doing so, they will change the methods and priorities of previous generations.

Their journey will be blessed and burdensome. Like Israel each new generation of faith knows the great joy of being free but also the great frustration of living in community. They have great hope about the future but also great fear

about enemies and threats. Some things about the journey never change.

They will make it. It took Israel forty years, but they made it to the promise. Every generation can get there. Each can celebrate the blessings. Yet God requires something more from those who find the promise. God requires that we give those who follow us the resources and freedom to make their own journey. We must let the next generation pack for themselves. We must trust them into God's loving hands.



# Notes

## Preface

7 **The correspondent was direct:** Mrs. Jessie Yarborough Garland to J. Clyde Turner, October 31, 1930, Guilford File (Churches/Baptist/First Baptist), Greensboro Public Library. That Rowe likely read the letter is attested by the fact that most of the contents of this file were donated to the public library by Miss Nellie Rowe, his daughter and longtime public librarian.

**history published in 1926:** Walter Wheat Rowe, *The History of the Baptists of Greensboro, N.C., With Particular Reference to the Work and Growth of the First Baptist Church, 1850–1926* (Greensboro, NC: Joseph J. Stone, n.d.).

**supplanted by Turner's:** J. Clyde Turner, *A Century of Service: History of First Baptist Church, Greensboro, North Carolina, 1859–1959* (Charlotte, NC: Heritage Printers, Inc., 1959).

## Introduction

11 **The story is repeated:** In addition to the histories by Rowe and Turner, see also John Wells Simpson, *History of the First Presbyterian Church of Greensboro, N.C., 1824–1945* (n.p., privately printed, 1945), 12, and Ethel Stephens Arnett, *Greensboro, North Carolina: The County Seat of Guilford* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 125. Rowe is the source for the others, and he reports only that the story “was copied from a paper, and has been corroborated by others” (11). Paisley helped to organize the town’s First Presbyterian Church in 1824.

**village of Greensborough :** Guilford’s county seat was originally spelled “Greensborough,” which came to be shortened at different times (both before and after the Civil War) by governmental agencies, local institutions and newspapers, and the United States Post Office. Arnett, *Greensboro*, 20.

**leather-bound pocket notebook:** Dodson's Appointment and Memoranda Book (1844–46), Elias Dodson Papers, MS31, Z. Smith Reynolds Library Special Collection and Archives, Wake Forest University.

### Chapter 1: This Little Flock

- 13 **On January 13, 1855:** Details (including the quotation from the *Patriot*) are from Allen W. Trelease, *The North Carolina Railroad, 1849–1871, and the Modernization of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 36–37.  
**In a letter that appeared:** N. J. Palmer, “Report from Greensborough,” September 8, 1847, *Biblical Recorder*, October 23, 1847.  
**steam-powered cotton mill:** The Mount Hecla Steam Cotton Mill was the state's first steam-powered cotton mill.
- 14 **printed another letter:** J. J. James, “Report from Bro. James,” July 1847, *Biblical Recorder*, July 31, 1847.
- 15 **James received fifty dollars:** Livingston Johnson, *History of the North Carolina Baptist State Convention* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton Printing Co., 1908), 46–47.  
**Elias Dodson:** His biography awaits the writing, but a place to begin would be the obituaries and tributes collected by his namesake Elias Dodson Poe and found in the Elias Dodson Papers.  
**George Washington Paschal:** George Washington Paschal, *History of Wake Forest College*, vol. 1, 1834–65 (Wake Forest, NC: Wake Forest College, 1935), 253.  
**suggested a commanding presence:** The description of Dodson and the account of his preaching are by Edwin McNeill Poteat, *Religious Herald* (Richmond, VA), letter to the editor, n.d., Elias Dodson Papers.  
**attention of a Moravian minister:** Maximilian E. Grunert noted in his “Diary of the Bethania Congregation” for October 27, 1856, that “a Baptist preacher by the name of Dodgson delivered a short sermon for us on I Cor. 16:22.” Judging from the text and Dodson's peripatetic nature (he was known to preach in the area), it seems likely that the Moravian was referring to Elias. See Kenneth G. Hamilton, ed., *Records of the Moravians in North Carolina*, vol. 11, 1852–79 (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1969), 6018.
- 16 **“destitute of all the means”:** *Minutes of the Thirteenth Session of the Beulah Baptist Association*, Milton, NC, September 18–21, 1846.  
**“destitute region”:** Elias Dodson, “A Destitute Region,” *Biblical Recorder*, June 14, 1845.

**Dodson also pleaded:** Elias Dodson, “Baptist State Convention,” *Biblical Recorder*, October 4, 1845.

**Dodson renewed his efforts:** Elias Dodson, “Guilford Country,” *Biblical Recorder*, March 21, 1846.

**meeting as an “arm”:** Johnson, *History*, 48.

**An anonymous writer:** “Revival in Greensboro,” *Biblical Recorder*, March 3, 1849.

**17** **Dodson reported:** *Minutes of the Seventeenth Annual Session of the Beulah Baptist Association*, Mt. Hermon Meeting House (Orange County), NC, August 2–5, 1850.

**Finally, on August 15, 1851:** *Minutes of the Eighteenth Annual Session of the Beulah Baptist Association*, Goodwill Meeting House (Forsyth County), NC, August 15–18, 1851.

**At the next session:** *Minutes of the Nineteenth Annual Session of the Beulah Baptist Association*, Ephesus Meeting House (Person County), NC, August 13–16, 1852.

**18** **August 1853 session:** *Minutes of the Twentieth Annual Session of the Beulah Baptist Association*, Mount Airy, NC, August 19–22, 1853.

**Dodson jotted down:** Dodson’s Appointment and Memoranda Book (1844–46), Elias Dodson Papers.

**Dodson concluded a letter:** Elias Dodson, “For the Recorder,” *Biblical Recorder*, July 8, 1853.

**the old meetinghouse:** Accounts of the brick church’s dimensions vary slightly in older histories. The details here are from West Market Street United Methodist Church, “Our History,” <http://www.wmsumc.org/wmpast.htm> (accessed July 23, 2008).

**19** **Dodson paid \$416:** W. H. Eller, Manuscript History, ca. 1917, First Baptist Church Greensboro. Later in the same manuscript, Eller (a church leader and builder in the early twentieth century) also gives the price as \$450, but he adds so many descriptive details about the building in the earlier passage that the former price is more convincing. (The manuscript may no longer be complete and its pages are difficult to properly sequence.)

**At its session the next year:** *Minutes of the Twenty-Second Annual Session of the Beulah Baptist Association*, Madison, NC, August 17–20, 1855.

**20** **writing in the Recorder:** Elias Dodson, “For the Recorder,” *Biblical Recorder*, January 4, 1855.

**As early as 1852:** *Proceedings of the Twenty-Third Annual Session of the*

*Baptist State Convention of North Carolina*, Smithfield, NC, October 14–18, 1852.

**At the 1854 session:** *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Session of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina*, Fayetteville, NC, October 12–16, 1854.

**James McDaniel underscored:** *Proceedings of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Session of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina*, Hertford, NC, November 4–9, 1857.

**appointed Elder Amos Weaver:** *Proceedings of the Twenty-Seventh Annual Session of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina*, Raleigh, NC, November 5–10, 1856.

**By the end of 1858:** *Proceedings of the Twenty-Ninth Annual Session of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina*, Raleigh, NC, November 10–15, 1858.

21 **requested from the Beulah Association:** *Minutes of the Twenty-Third Annual Session of the Beulah Baptist Association*, Mill Creek (Person County), NC, August 15–18, 1856.

**welcomed by Amos Weaver:** *Minutes of the Twentieth-Fourth Session of the Liberty Baptist Association*, Abbotts Creek Meeting House (Davidson County), NC, August 22–25, 1856.

**“rather aged but homely genius”:** Eller, Manuscript History.

**directed him:** *Proceedings of the Twenty-Seventh Annual Session of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina*, Raleigh, November 5–10, 1856.

**Rufus Weaver wrote:** Rufus W. Weaver, “O. Henry’s Town and Its Awakening,” *Greensboro Daily News*, July 2, 1919. Charles C. Weaver, the brother of Rufus, also grew up in the church and later served as president of Emory and Henry College.

**a modest frame structure:** In his manuscript history of the church, W. H. Eller said that the stone foundation was still visible at the time he was writing (ca. 1917). According to the Rev. Samuel M. Rankin of Buffalo Presbyterian Church, the building stood until 1875 when a storm blew it over. The six-acre site, including a small cemetery dating to the eighteenth century, was deeded to the Rolling Roads Church of the Nazarene by Short’s descendants in 1958. Now leveled and shaded by oak trees (with little evidence of the cemetery remaining), it is located just south of Interstate 40 and within sight of Four Seasons Mall at 2207 Rheims Drive. A brick monument at the site is inscribed, “Jonathan Short, Apr 22, 1847.” A bronze plaque, now disappeared, read, “In grate-

ful memory of Jonathan Short who donated this land in 1839 for the Glory of God.” See Eller, Manuscript History; S. M. Rankin, *History of Buffalo Presbyterian Church and Her People* (Greensboro, NC: Joseph J. Stone, 1934), 212; *Greensboro Record*, December 4, 1958, and March 22, 1963; and O. Norris and Rebecca H. Smith, *Family Burying Grounds and Abandoned Church Cemeteries in Guilford County, North Carolina and Its Immediate Environs* (Greensboro, NC: Guilford County Genealogical Society, 1978; 2nd ed. 1994), 23.

**22** **rent by antislavery controversy:** W. H. Eller states that much of the membership lived in the area of the Cumberland Presbyterian church. According to him, “much disorder prevailed” in the church as a result of the Free Soil controversy over the expansion of slavery into the western territories. Nowhere in his disjointed, twenty-page manuscript does Eller reveal his sources of information. Eller, Manuscript History.

**Daniel Worth:** The case is described in Guion Griffis Johnson, *Antebellum North-Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 579–80.

**Elder Orin Churchill:** Apparently this is the same individual as the “Orrin” Churchill who was listed as clerk of the Greensboro congregation at the 1852 session of the Beulah Baptist Association (see above) and who also printed under the name, “O. Churchill, Greensborough,” the minutes of the Association’s 1855 session.

**“a rather large man”:** Eller, Manuscript History.

**23** **“purify themselves:** *Minutes of the Twentieth-Fifth Session of the Liberty Baptist Association*, Reed’s Cross Roads (Davidson County), NC, August 21, 22 and 24, 1857.

**“go on the ground”:** *Minutes of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Liberty Baptist Association*, Holloway’s Meeting-House (Davidson County), NC, August 20, 21 and 23, 1858.

**declared the church “extinct”:** *Minutes of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Liberty Baptist Association*, New Friendship Church (Forsyth County), NC, August 26, 27 and 28, 1859.

**“My salary for 1856”:** Quoted in Charles E. Maddry, “One Hundred Years of State Missions,” *The Growth of One Hundred Years: Addresses Delivered at the First Centennial Session of the Baptist State Convention Held in Greenville, North Carolina, March 26–27, 1930* (Raleigh, NC: The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, 1930), 96.

**he lamented again:** Elias Dodson, “Greensborough and Salisbury,” *Biblical Recorder*, September 2, 1858.

**appointed an elder:** *Proceedings of the Thirtieth Annual Session of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina*, Charlotte, NC, November 2–7, 1859.

### Chapter 2: A Mutual Care

- 24 **Elder Levi Thorne:** Thorne spelled his name with an “e.”  
**closest point on the railroad:** Trelease, *North Carolina Railroad*, 29.  
**Elder Thomas E. Skinner:** A very brief outline of the Skinner family can be found in Maddry, “One Hundred Years of State Missions,” 95.  
**agent of the Baptist State Convention:** For a description of Mitchell’s work as agent, see Paschal, *History of Wake Forest College*, vol. 1, 290–307.  
**New Hampshire Baptist Convention:** Charles W. Deweese, *Baptist Church Covenants* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1990), 61–3 and 157–8.
- 27 **preaching in town:** “Constitution,” *Biblical Recorder*, March 24, 1859.  
**board of managers reported:** *Proceedings of the Thirtieth Annual Session of the Baptist State Convention*, Charlotte, NC, November 2–7, 1859.
- 28 **Peyton H. Bilbro:** Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Northampton County, Virginia, Population Schedule.  
**she was removed:** The church minutes for November 2, 1892, report that fellowship was withdrawn from M.E. Bilbro because she had united with the Methodist Episcopal Church.  
**Catharine Jollie:** The family name especially is spelled in a variety of ways—Jolly, Jollie, Jollee—even in church records. The spelling preferred in this account is the one used in the oldest surviving church minute book.  
**Born in North Carolina:** Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Guilford County, North Carolina, Population Schedule.  
**Eller would note:** Eller, Manuscript History.  
**Mary D. Gregg:** Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Guilford County, North Carolina, Population Schedule.  
**Mary Shackelford:** Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Guilford County, North Carolina, Population Schedule.  
**described as having:** Eller, Manuscript History.
- 28-29 **slave schedule:** Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Guilford County, North Carolina, Slave Schedule. Slave schedules list slaves only by their sex and age under their owner’s name.

- 29** **only family with this surname:** Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Guilford County, North Carolina, Population Schedule.
- Sanford's Liver Invigorator:** *Greensborough Patriot*, March 18, 1859.
- newspaper announcement:** In conducting an inventory for the Historical Records Survey (a project of the Works Progress Administration) in 1940, Mrs. Annette S. Tinsley copied this newspaper account from a clipping that she stated she had found in the personal scrapbook of A.W. Ingold. Although she noted that the clipping came from the *Greensborough Patriot*, the microfilmed copy of the newspaper shows no such article. The whereabouts of Mr. Ingold's scrapbook are unknown. First Baptist Church Greensboro.
- unanimously admitted:** *Minutes of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Session of the Beulah Baptist Association*, Elm Grove (Guilford County), North Carolina, August 12–15, 1859.
- five sisters in the faith:** Eller, Manuscript History and A. Wayland Cooke, "Early Baptist Church in Greensboro," typescript, ca. 1907, Guilford File (Churches/Baptist/First Baptist), Greensboro Public Library. Without explanation, Eller described Thomas and Newton as Baptists and "congenial" [to the church] but "probably never members of the Greensboro church."
- One early account:** "Historical Sketch of Greensboro Baptist Church read before B.Y.P.U.," anonymous manuscript, ca. 1897, Guilford File (Churches/Baptist/First Baptist), Greensboro Public Library.
- 30** **Mary A. Payne:** Walter W. Rowe and Arthur Wayland Cooke, *In Memoriam: Mrs. Mary A. Dixon and Mrs. Mary A. Payne* (Greensboro, NC: privately printed, 1906). First Baptist Church Greensboro.
- Charles Edwin Willoughby Dobbs:** The biographical information is from James R. Duvall, "Baptist History Homepage," [http://www.geocities.com/baptist\\_documents/index.html](http://www.geocities.com/baptist_documents/index.html) (accessed July 25, 2008). Dobbs' *Studies in Baptism* (1891) was an encyclopedic account of the subject, written with the contributions of nineteen nineteenth-century Baptist ministers. According to Rowe, Dobbs and Margaret Buchanan were baptized in Buffalo Creek on June 26, 1859, with Matthew T. Yates offering prayer. Rowe, *History of the Baptists*, 66.
- J. S. Walthall and J. J. James:** "Visit to Greensboro," *Biblical Recorder*, July 19, 1860.
- A new courthouse:** Courthouse details are from the *Greensborough Patriot* and appear in Arnett, *Greensboro*, 54.
- Miss Eliza Moring:** Eller, Manuscript History.

- 31**     **a later neighbor:** Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Guilford County, North Carolina, Population Schedule.  
**one later writer declared:** Eller, Manuscript History. Eller did not join the church until years after Mitchell had left and the church on South Elm Street had burned and was abandoned by the congregation, which means that his account of Mitchell in the pulpit must be secondhand.  
**Margaret N. Buchanan:** Eller, Manuscript History.  
**Sister Marley:** Anonymous, "Historical Sketch."  
**board of managers reported:** *Proceedings of the Thirty-First Annual Session of the Baptist State Convention*, Goldsboro, NC, October 31, and November 1–3, 1860.  
**continued to be hopeful:** *Proceedings of the Thirty-Second Annual Session of the Baptist State Convention*, Raleigh, North Carolina, November 13–18, 1861.
- 32**     **Mitchell's resignation:** Cooke, "Early Baptist Church."  
**continued to visit and preach:** "First Baptist Church, Free of Debt, Will Be Dedicated This Morning," *Greensboro Daily News*, April 8, 1917.  
**church tried to call him:** See entry for November 13, 1874, Church Minute Book, 1873–85, First Baptist Church Greensboro.  
**Elder Skinner:** Eller, Manuscript History.  
**Elder J. B. Jackson:** Eller, Manuscript History and Anonymous, "Historical Sketch."  
**North Carolina roots:** Biographical information for Theodore and Annie Whitfield are taken from an unsigned and undated [ca. 1932] clipping from the *Biblical Recorder*, First Baptist Church Greensboro.  
**Whitfield authored a tract:** Rev. Theo. Whitfield, "An Appeal to Backslidden Christians," n. d. [ca. 1861–65], University of North Carolina University Library, "Documenting the American South," docsouth.unc.edu/imls/whitfield/whitfield.html (accessed July 26, 2008).  
**earlier historical sketch:** Cooke, "Early Baptist Church."  
**Union forces threatened:** Richard R. Saunders, Sr., comp., *Open Doors and Closed Windows of the First Baptist Church of Reidsville, North Carolina* (Reidsville, NC: privately printed, 1948), 272.  
**reputedly without salary:** Saunders, *Open Doors*, 272.
- 33**     **renewing their subscriptions:** *Biblical Recorder*, June 3 and August 19, 1863.  
**Dodson's column:** *Biblical Recorder*, January 4, 1863.  
**work as a missionary:** "John Mitchell," Biographical File, North Carolina Baptist Historical Collection, Wake Forest University.



**Thorne managed to secure:** J. William Jones, *Christ in the Camp, or Religion in the Confederate Army* (Atlanta, GA: Martin & Hoyt, 1904), 151.

**convention commissioned Elder Skinner:** *Proceedings of the Thirty-Fourth Annual Session of the Baptist State Convention*, Raleigh, NC, October 28–31, 1864.

**state convention directed:** Johnson, *History*, 71.

**Daniel H. La Pish reported:** *Minutes of the Thirty-First Annual Session of the Beulah Baptist Association*, Clement Church (Person County), NC, August 12–15, 1864.

**Even in 1866:** *Minutes of the Thirty-Third Annual Session of the Beulah Baptist Association*, Kerr Chapel (Caswell County), NC, August 10–13, 1866.

**Jacob Henry Smith preached:** Simpson, *History of the First Presbyterian Church*, 39.

34 **Mary A. Dixon moved:** Cooke, “Early Baptist Church.”

**Beulah Association:** *Minutes of the Thirty-Fourth Annual Session of the Beulah Baptist Association*, Church at Mt. Olive (Stokes County), NC, August 9–12, 1867.

**prospective pastor:** J. B. Richardson to W. W. Rowe, March 11, 1904, Guilford File (Churches/Baptist/First Baptist), Greensboro Public Library.

### Chapter 3: Many and Sore Trials

36 **Albion W. Tourgée:** Perhaps Tourgée’s greatest claim to fame was serving as lead counsel to Homer Plessy in the notorious Supreme Court case, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which ruled against Plessy to uphold the constitutionality of segregation. In his brief, Tourgée introduced the metaphor of the law as being “color-blind.” Historian Mark Elliott details Tourgée’s legal adoption of Adaline Patilo and the taking into his home of her younger sister Mary and mother Louisa Patilo in *Color-Blind Justice: Albion Tourgée and the Quest for Racial Equality from the Civil War to Plessy v. Ferguson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 136–39. Elliott also relates the encounter with the Baptist church, which is taken from Nell Craig, “Greensboro Tolerantly Regards Memory Albion Winegar Tourgee, Once Hated Carpetbagger Judge,” *Greensboro Record*, November 8, 1925.

**Jessie Yarborough Garland:** Garland to Turner, October 31, 1930.

37 **Richardson recalled in a letter:** J. B. Richardson to W. W. Rowe, March

11, 1904, Guilford File (Churches/Baptist/First Baptist), Greensboro Public Library. Richardson wrote the letter in response to a request from Rowe for information to use in the memoriam Rowe was writing for Sisters Dixon and Payne. All of the Richardson quotations in this chapter come from this letter.

**“cobbler and wage earner as watchman”:** Chas. Emerson & Co.’s *Winston, Salem & Greensboro, North Carolina, Directory, 1879–80*, lists Watson B. Crump’s occupation as “grocer,” as does the 1880 federal census for Guilford County. The 1892–93 directory shows “W. B. Crump” working for the railroad. Greensboro History Museum Archives, [http://greensborohistory.org/archives/Highlights\\_Pages/City\\_Directory\\_Pages/CityDir.htm](http://greensborohistory.org/archives/Highlights_Pages/City_Directory_Pages/CityDir.htm) (accessed July 29, 2008).

38 **Mission Board report:** Maddry, “One Hundred Years of State Missions,” 98.

**introduced by J. H. Mills:** Maddry, “One Hundred Years of State Missions,” 98.

39 **At the Beulah Association meeting:** *Minutes of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Session of the Beulah Baptist Association*, Yanceyville, NC, August 11–14, 1871.

**The Beulah Association prepared a deed:** Guilford County Register of Deeds, Book 44, page 365. Attorneys A. J. Dodamead and William S. Fontaine were granted power-of-attorney in Book 44, page 263, in order to conduct the title transfer. (At some point the Beulah Association had reimbursed Dodson for his expense in purchasing the building, which is why in 1871 the association held title to the property.)

40 **The Greensboro Patriot:** The announcements are from the July 4, July 24, August 28, and September 4, 1872.

**A correspondent:** *Greensboro Patriot*, January 22, 1873. In a letter printed in the *Patriot* on January 8, 1873, Dr. Richardson thanked the Christmas donations of approximately \$70 given to him and his family by “many citizens of Greensboro,” which “gladdened the hearts of our little family.”

**was dedicated:** *Greensboro Patriot*, May 31 and June 14, 1876.

42 **Rowe assured the reader:** Rowe, *History of the Baptists*, 22–3.

**Mrs. Sarah A. Potts:** The 1870 federal census for Guilford County lists Sarah Potts as the thirty-nine-year-old wife of railroad agent Robert Potts and mother of four children. Ninth Census of the United States, 1870: Guilford County, North Carolina, Population Schedule.

43 **brewed for years:** Church clerk R. L. Vernon recorded in the minute

book for the church conference of May 8, 1874, the lengthy report of the committee charged with compiling the facts of the case.

45 **Brother Weaver's assessment:** Church Minute Book, October 4, 1873.  
**first church manuals:** Church Minute Book, July 10 and September 18, 1874.

**sixty-nine members:** The church statistics were reported by Richardson and Vernon at the August 1874 session of the Beulah Association. *Minutes of the Fortieth Annual Session of the Beulah Baptist Association*, Arm of the Madison Church, near Yarboro's Mill (Caswell County, NC), August 7–10, 1874.

47 **dedicated and insured:** Church Minute Book, March 3 and 31, May 5, and June 30, 1876.

**crafted six chairs:** Unless by the word “seats,” the minutes for June 4, 185, mean “pews,” then one of Newell's chairs may survive as the goose-neck armchair still displayed in the church. (The matching chair is a reproduction.)

48 **unflattering reports:** Church Minute Book, March 21 and 30, 1877.

49 **At the session:** *Minutes of the Forty-Third Annual Session of the Beulah Baptist Association*, Greensboro Baptist Church, Greensboro, NC, August 10–13, 1877. The session's introductory sermon was preached by William S. Fontaine of Reidsville on the text, “Occupy till I come” (Luke 19:13).

“**Dime Sociable**”: What happened at such an event is not stated.

50 **much to investigate:** Incidents like the ones cited here are sprinkled throughout the church minutes but seem more frequent in this period. Church Minute Book, December 22, 1879.

**two new committees were appointed:** Church Minute Book, May 2, 1879.

51 **increased its financial support:** Church Minute Book, December 3, 1881, and December 2, 1882.

**gift of a new organ:** Church Minute Book, December 2, 1882. Laura Boner is listed as a dressmaker in the *Greensboro City Directory for 1892–'93*. For the evaluation of Boner (later Mrs. H. A. Siddall) as one of the best Sunday school teachers, see Rowe, *History of the Baptists*, 74.

**Lee M. Hawkins:** Church Minute Book, March 3 and June 2, 1883. Hawkins' occupation is listed in the *Greensboro City Directory for 1892–93*.

**presented the congregation:** Church Minute Book, September 1, 1883.

**“a gracious revival”:** Church Minute Book, January 2 and February 3,

1883. The revival was led by Baldwin and Dr. W. A. Nelson of Shelby, NC. **only lukewarm encouragement:** The minutes of the Foreign Mission Board do not make plain why there was such hesitation to undertake this mission, although Baldwin's efforts appear to have been appreciated. International Mission Board, "Archives and Records Services," <http://archives.imb.org> (accessed July 27, 2008).

**Almer Newell hustled:** Church Minute Book, November 11 and 20, 1884.

52 **"wants a whale":** Rowe, *History of the Baptists*, 29–30.

#### Chapter 4: Faithful, Zealous Work

53 **adopted a resolution:** The resolution is quoted in Rowe and Cooke, *In Memoriam*, 4–5. Subsequent quotations regarding Mary Dixon appearing in this chapter are taken from this booklet.

**Ladies' Missionary and Aid Society:** Ladies Missionary and Aid Society Secretary's Account Book, 1889–93, First Baptist Church Greensboro.

54 **memorial resolutions:** Church Minute Book, February 24, 1890 (Newell) and April 27, 1890 (Weaver).

**revised covenant:** Church Minute Book, 1885–90. Although shorter, the new covenant was similarly worded to the 1833 covenant of the New Hampshire Baptist Convention and was likely derived from William Crowell's *The Church Member's Hand-Book: A Guide to the Doctrines and Practices of Baptist Churches* (1849). One clause new to this covenant affirmed "that we will endeavor, by example and effort, to win souls to Christ." The covenant was reprinted in September 1906 in the *Member's Manual of the First Baptist Church, Greensboro, N.C.* As chairman of the Committee to Revise the Constitution and By-laws, Judge William M. York determined in 1967 that no new covenant had been adopted during the pastorates of either Dr. Turner or Dr. Bowen (and no indication of any revision between 1906 and 1910), although the covenant from 1885 had apparently fallen into neglect and was somewhat forgotten. The church bulletins for July 3, 1938, and February 20, 1949, for example, featured yet another covenant: the one composed by J. Newton Brown that appeared in his *The Baptist Church Manual* (1853) and was probably the most widely used of all Baptist covenants. According to Dewese, the similar wording of these covenants shows their close relationship with each other. The William Crowell covenant (1849), first appearing in church min-

utes in 1885, reprinted in the church manual in 1906, and “rediscovered” by Judge York in 1967 and subsequently reaffirmed by the church on February 12, 1967, remains in use today. For details on the origins and influences of these covenants, see Deweese, *Baptist Church Covenants*, 64–5.

**Discussions had begun:** Church Minute Book, May 7, June 5, and December 4, 1885. The money that had been paid for laying the gas pipe was returned to the church as a donation for the new building.

**“no insurance”:** Why the church was at this time uninsured is unstated; perhaps financial hardship had necessitated it.

**An anonymous eyewitness:** This source, “one of the then younger members” (Rowe?), is quoted at length in Rowe, *A History of the Baptists*, 30–2.

- 55 **congregation responded:** For progress on the church’s recovery efforts, see Church Minute Book, July 31, August 16, September 4, September 27, October 5, 1885, and June 6, 1886. The South Elm Street lot was sold to John W. Wharton, whose general store was where the conflagration had begun.

**Thomas Woodroffe:** Allen W. Trelease, *Making North Carolina Literate: The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, from Normal School to Metropolitan University* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2004), 9.

- 56 **changed the location:** Johnson, *History*, 107.

- 57 **“The weather”:** “Consecration of the New Baptist Church,” *Morning News*, May 18, 1887.

- 59 **Rowe wrote a letter:** A copy of the letter, dated November 14, 1887, is laid into the Church Minute Book.

**Piney Grove:** The building at Piney Grove (location not specified) was given to the South Elm Street (Asheboro Street) Baptist Church in 1900. According to the minutes of the 1887 session of the Beulah Association, the chapel cost \$200 to build. *Minutes of the Fifty-Third Annual Session of the Beulah Baptist Association*, Reidsville, NC, August 11–13, 1887.

**The society:** Constitution of the Ladies’ Missionary and Aid Society of the Greensboro Baptist Church, 1886, Secretary’s Account Book.

- 60 **four days of meetings:** Details of the convention’s activities from Johnson, *History*, 112–114.

- 61 **A rhythm of church life:** Details from Church Minute Book, January 4, February 8, June 7, July 12, August 9, September 6 and 12, De-

cember 12, 1889, and January 7, 1890.

**Gwaltney gave an interview:** "Interview," *Biblical Recorder*, August 28, 1889.

62 **early historical sketch:** Anonymous, "Historical Sketch."

63 **Charles A. G. Thomas:** Church Minute Book, July 17 and 27, 1892. Regarding a pastor's salary, Thomas later wrote, "Over 34 years we have worked together on a salary which has never been over \$1500 and house rent. Through these years seven sons have been in the home. . . . A \$1500 salary will go farther with God's blessing and presence, than \$5000 without His guidance." Rev. C. A. G. Thomas, "I Enjoyed Poverty and Remained in the Ministry," *Charity & Children*, January 10, 1924. Transcript in Biographical File, North Carolina Baptist Historical Collection, Wake Forest University.

64 **growing congregation:** A. Wayland Cooke wrote that Thomas "almost always had a crowded house and the church grew rapidly under his ministry." *History and Directory, 1903, First Baptist Church, Greensboro, N.C.* (Greensboro, NC: privately printed, 1903), n.p. First Baptist Church Greensboro.

65 **recalled with affection:** Johnson developed a close friendship with Dr. Egbert W. Smith, pastor of First Presbyterian Church and son of long serving Dr. Jacob Henry Smith, which survived for many years afterward, as their affectionate correspondence reveals. Livingston Johnson Papers, MS131, Z. Smith Reynolds Library Special Collections and Archives, Wake Forest University.

**again convened:** Johnson, *History*, 124-7.

66 **Hucomuga Cotton Mills:** Producing colored cotton goods beginning in 1895, the Hucomuga plant was one of the smaller enterprises of the Cone family.

**Eller remembered:** Eller, Manuscript History.

**intersection of South Elm and East Whittington Streets:** Eller, Manuscript History.

**unpublished memoir:** Fannie Memory Johnson, "Blessed Experiences," typescript, ca. 1931, Livingston Johnson Papers.

67 **reported intoxicated:** Church Minute Book, June 27 and August 1, 1900.

68 **autobiographical sketch:** Livingston Johnson, "Led by an Unseen Hand," pamphlet, 1929, Livingston Johnson Papers.

### Chapter 5: Unprecedented Achievement

- 71 **resolutions of thanksgiving:** Church Minute Book, May 22, 1907.  
**Train master:** *Greensboro City Directory for 1892–93*.  
**according to W. H. Eller:** Eller, Manuscript History.
- 74 **reprinted as a tract:** Henry W. Battle, “An Indictment of the Cigarette Habit’: A Sermon Preached in the Sunday Evening Service of First Baptist Church of Greensboro, North Carolina, September 10, 1905” (Greensboro, NC: privately printed, n.d.), First Baptist Church Greensboro.
- 75 **finances were judged:** November 15, 1905, Church Minute Book, 1890–1911.  
**lot was purchased:** Church Minute Book, September 10, 1905. See also “Forest Avenue Baptist Church, Greensboro, Brief History of Its Organization and Growth, March 11, 1906, to March 10, 1907” (Greensboro, NC: privately printed, n.d), College Park Baptist Church.  
**wrote the seminarian:** Livingston Johnson to Charles E. Maddry, December 20, 1905, College Park Baptist Church.  
**Maddry wrote soon:** *Biblical Recorder*, April 2, 1906.
- 76 **constituted in the chapel:** Church Minute Book, February 28, 1906, and “Forest Avenue Baptist Church,” n.p.
- 79 **Their building:** Details of the building are taken from “Forest Avenue Baptist Church.”  
**description of the church:** “Baptists Will Build \$35,000 Edifice Here,” *Daily Industrial News*, March 23, 1906. Additional information can be found in “Some Facts About the Building” printed on the back of the photograph of the newly-completed church, First Baptist Church Greensboro.
- 80 **Opening exercises:** Program bulletin, First Baptist Church Greensboro.
- 81 **electrified the convention:** Johnson, *History*, 146–7. Johnson noted that the other high point of this session was the enthusiastic subscribing to the endowment of Wake Forest College.
- 83 **special meeting:** Church Minute Book, October 20, 1907. Because of the associations between Dr. J. L. White and J. Clyde Turner, the former’s name often appears in later church memorials for Turner with White’s name invariably—and incorrectly—given as “John.” Jacob Lee White was born in Forsyth County, North Carolina, in 1863.
- 85 **brochure:** “Evangelist W. W. Hamilton at First Baptist Church,” brochure, First Baptist Church Greensboro.  
**Another revival:** Mrs. Nell Hopkins, interview by Sandra Canipe, n.d.

[1976], tape recording, First Baptist Church Greensboro.

- 86 **Finishing Mills:** Details of the origins of Magnolia Street Baptist Church are from Mrs. G. H. Williamson and Mrs. Paul Stanton, "Our First 50 Years," August 30, 1959, Magnolia Street Baptist Church Greensboro, <http://www.magnoliastreetbc.org> (accessed July 29, 2008).

### Chapter 6: In the Presence of All His People

- 87 **preserved in the papers:** J. Clyde Turner to Dr. A. T. Robertson, January 10, 1902, Archibald Thomas Robertson Papers, Archives and Special Collections, James P. Boyce Centennial Library, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.

- 88 **writing again:** J. Clyde Turner to Dr. A. T. Robertson, October 20, 1931, Robertson Papers.

**in a letter:** J. D. Wilkins to Dr. Gaines S. Dobbins, March 1, 1956, First Baptist Church Greensboro. Wilkins also expressed his concern to Fred Williams of the Committee on Church Constitutions (to whom he sent a copy of the 1906 church manual) and Edwin M. Stanley of the Committee on Committees.

**Turner acknowledged:** Turner, *A Century of Service*, 44.

- 89 **have survived:** Whether either Turner or Wilkins knew these volumes existed is unclear.

**a young man:** For a biographical sketch of Turner's life, see W. Randall Lolley and Alton H. McEachern, comp., *Bold Preaching About Christ: Sermons by J. Clyde Turner* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1978), 11–32.

**Eulalia Turner:** Michael C. Blackwell, *A Place for Miracles: Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina* (Boone, NC: Parkway Publishers, 2002), 37, and Michael C. Blackwell, email message to author, December 2, 2008. The strong tie between First Baptist and Mills Home fostered by the Turners continues to the present, as evidenced by Dr. Blackwell's recurrent speaking at the church's annual Thanksgiving dinner celebration every year since 1983.

**"unusually large congregation":** The account of that morning is taken from the *Greensboro Telegram*, December 6, 1910. The newspaper further opined that, "Mr. Turner is a consecrated man, a fluent speaker, well educated and withal, a person who bears himself with ease and confidence."

- 91 **Ladies' Aid Society:** Turner, *A Century of Service*, 43.

**"If we can raise":** Turner, *A Century of Service*, 43.



**removal reduced the number:** Turner, *A Century of Service*, 44.

**church was visited:** Turner, *A Century of Service*, 46.

**A new mission:** Turner, *A Century of Service*, 46.

**Much of Turner's preaching:** See Lolley and McEachern, *Bold Preaching*, and Eric S. Porterfield, "J. Clyde Turner and Twentieth Century Southern Baptist Identity," (master's thesis, Duke University, 1998).

**Two sermons:** "Greensboro Not Only Bigger but Better" and "Thanksgiving Sermon," J. Clyde Turner Papers, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary Library, Wake Forest, North Carolina.

93 **legislative committee brochure:** "Some North Carolinians on Equal Pay," brochure, n.d. [1918?], University of North Carolina Library, "Documenting the American South," <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/ncpay/menu.html> (accessed July 30, 2008).

**served with Wake Forest President:** E. Glenn Hinson, "Baptist Attitudes Toward War and Peace since 1914," *Baptist Heritage and History*, Winter 2004, [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0NXG/is\\_1\\_39/ai\\_113759511](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0NXG/is_1_39/ai_113759511) (accessed July 30, 2008).

**member of the United Dry Forces:** Frances Renfrow Doak, "Why North Carolina Voted Dry: Read before a Convention of the United Dry Forces in Greensboro, January 16, 1934," University of North Carolina Library, "Documenting the American South," <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/doak/doak.html> (accessed July 30, 2008).

**manageable debt:** Turner, *A Century of Service*, 45.

95 **On that day:** Details of the service, including quotations from Johnson's sermon, are taken from the *Greensboro Daily News*, April 9, 1917. For the order of worship, see "Dedicatory Service," First Baptist Church Greensboro.

96 **"When the War Will End":** Turner Papers.

**memorandum:** J. D. Wilkins, memorandum, May 28, 1918, First Baptist Church Greensboro.

**The Connecting Link:** The issues of June 26 and August 13, 1918, and an undated letter by Turner that was apparently intended for another issue have survived. First Baptist Church Greensboro.

97 **Wilkins omitted:** In the file with the newsletters are notes sent to Wilkins by individuals from whom he had asked for information. The unsigned BYPU notes are written in the neat hand of a high school student. The quotations of Mr. and Mrs. Spearman and Sergeant White are from the same file. In a handwritten letter to Wilkins dated August 19, 1918, Turner commends Wilkins for "performing a very helpful

service to both the church and the boys. Those to whom I have shown a copy of the letter are impressed with the value of it and I expect many churches to adopt the plan.”

98 **forced to close its doors:** The *Greensboro Daily News* of Sunday, October 6, 1918, announced that on the previous Saturday the Board of City Commissioners, reacting in part to a mass meeting of citizens the previous day demanding it take action, had ordered closed indefinitely churches, schools, theaters, and other public places.

99 **S. Cecil Hilliard:** *Greensboro Daily News*, October 28, 1918. Hilliard was Forest Avenue’s third pastor, having arrived in 1916. Turner conducted the funeral with the assistance of Rev. Raleigh White of Ashboro Street Baptist Church and ministers from West Market Street Methodist and Westminster Presbyterian churches.

**Turner estimated:** Greensboro’s Baptist pastors met once a week to share information about their congregations and coordinate joint efforts in the city, as recorded in a series of minute books from 1908 to 1938. Turner’s estimate is taken from a meeting on December 2, 1918. See Greensboro Baptist Pastors Conference Minute Book (1914–18), First Baptist Church Greensboro.

**When the session convened:** Much of the convention was devoted to discussion about the Million Dollar Educational Fund campaign. The editorializing of the *Greensboro Daily News* of January 15, 1919, shows how favorably Baptists had come to be viewed by many:

The Baptist denomination is comprised of some of the most forward-looking, progressive and energetic men of the state and is successfully prosecuting its plans for a steady expansion in all departments of church work. . . . *The Daily News* welcomes the brethren to Greensboro and sincerely trusts that their deliberation here may be so directed that the scope of their great work may ever be broadened and that the greatest measure of success shall attend their efforts in carrying the Gospel to every creature.

**gathered in Franklinville:** Details of the church’s annual report are taken from the *Greensboro Daily News*, July 26, 1918.

**minutes of the church:** Unfortunately, these are among the minutes now lost.

100 **huge campaign:** Information about the Seventy-Five Million Dollar Campaign, including quotations from the *Texas Baptist Standard* and Dr. R. W. Weaver, are taken from Ellen G. Harris, “Incorporating ‘Our Southern Zion’: The Southern Baptist Convention, 1880–1920,”

<http://www.xroads.virginia.edu/~MA02/harris/sbc/home.html> (accessed July 30, 2008).

**noted with pride:** Turner, *A Century of Service*, 47.

**Baptist World Alliance Congress:** Sweden had been neutral in the war, which had left many in Europe and North America disillusioned with appeals to national pride and patriotism.

102 **as described:** *Greensboro Daily News*, June 12 and 15, 1922.

**new quarters:** Turner, *A Century of Service*, 51.

103 **In a sermon:** “Some Marks of a Good Church Member,” Turner Papers.

**none was more revealing:** Deacon Minute Book, January 7, 1924, First Baptist Church Greensboro. For details of the campaign, see the *Greensboro Daily News*, January 11, 12, 13, and 15, 1924.

### Chapter 7: Wonderfully Blessed

105 **Mordecai F. Ham:** Sixteen-year-old Billy Graham was converted at a 1934 Ham-Ramsey meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina.

106 **he died:** Rowe’s obituary appears in the *Greensboro Daily News*, December 13, 1932.

**“possibly the greatest”:** “Baptist Alliance in World Congress,” *New York Times*, June 25, 1928.

**Turner spoke:** “The Visions of Youth,” sermon, June 24, 1928, Baptist World Alliance, Toronto.

107 **Conference had asked Turner:** Greensboro Baptist Pastors Conference Minute Book, September 5, 1932.

108 **Judge William M. York:** “Judge” was an honorific bestowed on York (an attorney by profession) for his leading role in establishing Greensboro’s first Juvenile Court in 1927.

109 **On December 1, 1935:** “In One Pulpit 25 Years” and “Dr. Turner Accorded Praise As He Completes Service of 25 Years As Baptist Pastor,” *Greensboro Daily News*, November 30 and December 2, 1935.

115 **a sunny Sunday afternoon:** Turner, *A Century of Service*, 59, and *Greensboro Daily News*, June 25, 1939

119 **To-Morrow:** A copy of the April 1944 issue (vol. I no. 7) is included in the Deacon Minute Book, June 5, 1944.

**some statistic:** The examples and the Turner quotation are from the Church Bulletins, May 26 and July 7, 1940.

120 **One church member:** Gay Hensley, undated note, First Baptist Church Greensboro.

122 **honor roll and service flag:** Church Bulletins, June 20, 1943. For a pho-

tograph of the flag and the first listing of the honor roll, see July 4, 1943. A typed copy of the remarks made at the occasion by McDaniel Lewis is in the Guilford File (Churches/Baptist/First Baptist), Greensboro Public Library.

- 128 **service flag:** The bulletin for October 13, 1946, has on its front page a photograph of the service flag hanging in the church auditorium, as it had since July 4, 1943, but with far more stars.
- 129 **For J. D. Wilkins:** The quotations are taken from letters dated January 30 and February 8, 1947, Building File, First Baptist Church Greensboro.

### Chapter 8: Doing Business for God

- 131 **Hodge recalled:** C. S. Hodge to Alton H. McEachern, May 26, 1979, First Baptist Church Greensboro.
- congregational recollections:** Turner was frequently remembered for simply showing up unannounced at a home to visit. Seth C. Macon, for example, wrote that within days of being transferred to the home office of Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company, Turner called on him and his wife Hazel at the boardinghouse where the couple had found temporary lodging. Although “a birthright Quaker,” Macon accepted Turner’s invitation to join the church. Seth C. Macon, *Uphill Both Ways* (Greensboro, NC: privately printed, 2005), 237.
- polio epidemic:** Deacon Minute Book, June 7, 1948. In the church bulletin for June 13, 1948, Turner took pains to explain that only one child in a Sunday school of 2,000 members had contracted the disease, and hers was a mild case. By early August, the peak of the epidemic had been reached, and Turner expected normal church activities to resume in September.
- 132 **declined the offer:** For a biography, see George J. Griffin, *Claud B. Bowen: God’s Builder* (Greensboro, NC: privately printed, 1981). The Turner quotation is from page 72.
- good match:** Dr. Bowen’s accomplishments are recounted in “Claud Bowen Resigns, Going to N. Carolina,” *Daily Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, Mississippi) of July 18, 1948, and the church bulletin for September 5, 1948. See also the letter from J. D. Wilkins to church member and *Greensboro Daily News* reporter Robert Farley, July 20, 1948, First Baptist Church Greensboro.
- leather-bound volume:** Turner Papers.
- 133 **query:** Bertha Turner’s handwritten response to three pages of questions is at First Baptist Church Greensboro.
- 134 **welcome of sorts:** Griffin, *Claud B. Bowen*, 73.

- installation service:** The program appears in the church bulletin for September 5, 1948. For newspaper accounts, see “Dr. Claud Bowen to Take Pastorate Here Sunday,” *Greensboro Daily News*, September 1, 1948; “Dr. Bowen Installed As Pastor,” *Greensboro Daily News*, September 6, 1948; and “Pastor Installed,” *Greensboro Record*, September 6, 1948. The sermon topic is from Griffin, *Claud B. Bowen*, 74.
- 135 **newcomer to Greensboro:** Walter Frederick Williams, *Lucky Me! A Memoir of Work, Love and Adventure* (Greensboro, NC: privately printed, 2004), 139–40.
- had worked with him:** For his autobiography, see S. C. Ray, *I’m Glad I Stayed, 1949–1979* (Greensboro, NC: privately printed, 1979).
- 138 **three hundred people:** Details of the ceremony come from a wire recording of the event made by WFMY and preserved on compact disc. First Baptist Church Greensboro.
- 140 **Photographs:** See, for example, church bulletins for April 29, May 6 and 13, June 3, and August 5, 1951.
- 141 **Turner declared:** “Laying of the Corner Stone,” Turner Papers. See also Turner, *A Century of Service*, 66–7, and “Services for the Laying of the Corner Stone,” program, First Baptist Church Greensboro.
- 143 **S. C. Ray invited:** Ray recounted his efforts in *I’m Glad I Stayed*, 31–34, and in an interview with the author recorded on April 17, 2002. First Baptist Church Greensboro.
- 145 **received a letter:** Newton’s letter (which survives) was dated October 6, 1952, and printed in the church bulletin for October 12, 1952.
- fact sheets:** “Some Facts Concerning Our New Church Building and Its Facilities” and “Memorandum of Contractors and Principal Sources of Supply,” November 3, 1953, First Baptist Church Greensboro.
- 147 **newspaper reporter:** Sam Stuart McKeel, “New Church Is Opened Formally,” *Greensboro Daily News*, December 1, 1952.
- sermon:** Turner titled the sermon, “My House,” and indicated on its cover page the date and place where he preached it. The bulletin for the week’s services, however, lists it, “Christ in His Temple,” which is a different sermon in the Turner collection. I am indebted to Bill Youngmark for locating the sermon in the Turner Papers.
- 148 **prepared text:** The closing words are cited in the *Greensboro Daily News* article of December 1, 1952, and do not appear in Turner’s text.
- week of activity:** Speaker quotations are drawn from accounts appearing in the *Greensboro Daily News*, December 2–6, 1952.

### Chapter 9: Will Our Church Advance?

- 151 **two thousand people:** Details of the dedication service are from “2,000 Attend Dedication of New Church,” *Greensboro Daily News*, January 2, 1956, and the “Dedication” booklet published for the event by the church.
- 155 **At his funeral:** For a sketch of Wilkins’ life, from which the reference to Turner’s eulogy is taken, see S. C. Ray, *Foundation Stones: A Remembrance of Some Significant Leaders at First Baptist Church—Greensboro* (Greensboro, NC: privately published, n.d.).
- 157 **3,804:** The figures for membership and Sunday school attendance come from Turner, *A Century of Service*, 78.
- 158 **Randall Lolley:** In his resignation letter, Lolley told the congregation that “since being called into the ministry I have had a growing conviction that the call to preach is a call to prepare to preach. . . . It is this conviction which impels me to continue my formal education pursuing work leading to the advanced theological degree.” Lolley left Greensboro to serve as associate pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, while pursuing studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Church Bulletins, December 6, 1959.
- 159 **filled to capacity:** Details of the service, including Turner’s sermon, are from “100th Year Celebrated by Baptists,” *Greensboro Daily News*, March 9, 1959.
- 165 **Yvonne Cheek:** Dr. Cheek, president of her own consulting firm in Minneapolis, was the subject of the profile, “Changing Worlds,” *UNCG Magazine*, 6, no. 1 (Fall 2003): 32–34. The author is also indebted to her gracious telephone interview with him, July 16, 2008.
- 166 **closing laws:** Already in 1959 Bowen has prepared a resolution commending businesses that remained closed on Sunday, stating his intention to refuse to buy from businesses that did open “except in extreme emergencies,” imploring pastors and believers to set aside all of Sunday for spiritual purposes, and urging the city council “to enact a practical, honorable, and fair ordinance to protect our citizens and our Sunday against these various commercial encroachments.” Claud B. Bowen, typescript, November 22, 1959, First Baptist Church Greensboro.
- 170-71 **“Greetings”:** The bulletin now assumed the form of a newsletter and is so termed from this point onward in these pages.
- 176 **women were eligible:** Although not yet ready to allow women to serve as deacons, the church did take up the cause of Geneva N. Metzger,

who became a member in 1973 only to find that the Piedmont Baptist Association declined to ordain her as campus minister at UNCG, arguing that her position did not require ordination and that ordaining a woman would be divisive. Upon recommendation of deacons, the membership amended its bylaws to allow the church to ordain a candidate to Christian ministry. On Sunday evening, November 16, 1975, Metzger was ordained at First Baptist.

### Chapter 10: The White Columns

- 179 letters of tribute:** The excerpts are from Griffin, *Claud B. Bowen*, 114–8.  
**say little:** Griffin, *Claud B. Bowen*, 113.  
**Joe McNulty:** “They Came to Tell Him ‘Thank You,’” *Greensboro Daily News*, August 27, 1973.
- 180 call a pastor:** Although McEachern’s name had been presented to deacons at a special meeting on November 25, 1973, few others knew beforehand that he would be recommended until his presentation to the congregation on the Sunday morning when the call was to be issued. “Surely, I thought, they [the members of the Pulpit Committee] will talk to me about their recommendation before they present him to the church,” S. C. Ray wrote in his memoirs. “After all, I’ve been here in a close working relationship with the pastor of this church for twenty-four years.” Ray, who would go on to work productively with McEachern, concluded, “I almost let myself get a little bitter, but I decided that would be of no benefit to anyone, most of all not to myself.” Ray, *I’m Glad I Stayed*, 69.
- 181 Every Easter:** See, for example, the church newsletter for April 15, 1982.
- 183 raising thirty thousand dollars:** One of the memorial’s first gifts came from former church member Charlie L. Howard, age 103 years, of Melbourne, Florida, who for many years had lived across the street from the Turners on Gaston Street. He sent the memorial fund a check for \$10,000. Church Newsletters, March 28, 1974.
- 185 McEachern observed:** “Preaching Innovations Discussed,” *Greensboro Record*, July 31, 1976.
- 186 set of goals:** McEachern outlined his seven goals in successive newsletters from December 31, 1975, to February 5, 1976.
- 188 first four women:** At the deacon meeting of September 12, 1983, Ginny Smith spoke on behalf of the four women as their term of

service was completed. After expressing her appreciation for the manner in which they were accepted and for the patience and understanding demonstrated by the church, Dr. McEachern responded by declaring that they had served the church well and had set a fine precedent.

189 **demographic study:** Deacon Minutes, August 4, 1980.

### Chapter 11: In the Weather Together

205 **“peak in 1955”:** McEachern also pointed out that part of the drop in Sunday school enrollment was attributable to the 376 members who had moved to Southeast Chapel and another 783 who were removed from the membership roll when it was first computerized.

206 **huge cake:** Pat Chandler, Inez Omonhundro, Patsy Smith, Muriel Stutts, and Frances Williams prepared the cake which was unveiled at the Sunday anniversary luncheon, using 68 pounds of sugar, 44 pounds of shortening, 26 pounds of flour, 17 pounds of butter, 15 dozen eggs, and 3 gallons of milk. After being photographed, the cake was consumed by 1,100 members.

207 **greeted with applause:** One indication of the affection with which the congregation held Queen and his family was the love gift presented him upon his leaving. A substantial contribution was made to the mission in San Paolo, Brazil, where Queen and a party of church members had worked in 1985 in one of the first partnership evangelism programs undertaken by a church mission team. In addition, the family was given a Benbow-crafted chest of drawers.

208 **Havner remarked:** Dennis J. Hester, compiler, *The Vance Havner Quote Book: Sparkling Gems from the Most Often Quoted Preacher in America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1986), 43.

209 **W. A. Criswell:** Criswell also admitted that he was not familiar with the term “shared ministry,” which was then a current emphasis of the Sunday School Board’s church administration department. The quotations come from an undated news article by Ken Camp of the Baptist General Convention of Texas attached to the minutes of the deacon meeting for February 3, 1986.

211 **The last “Memo from McEachern”:** Dr. McEachern continued in the ministry until his retirement in 2001 after fifty years of service. He died at age seventy-six on January 3, 2009, in Sharpsburg, Georgia.

213 **Boroughs said:** “Greensboro Church Cleaves to Moderates, Votes to Join Southern Baptist Alliance,” *Greensboro News and Record*, Decem-



ber 7, 1988.

- 216 **“I would call it unanimous”**: “Lolley to Lead Greensboro First Baptist,” *Greensboro News and Record*, February 12, 1990.  
**“proximity and pain”**: *Greensboro News and Record*, February 12, 1990.  
**“going to the graveyard everyday”**: “Growing As a Leader: Randall Lolley Reflects on How He and His Work Have Changed Over the Years,”  
*Verbatim* (Department of Pastoral Care, North Carolina Baptist Hospitals, Inc.) 35, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 3–7.  
**Lolley had talked**: *Greensboro News and Record*, February 12, 1990.
- 217 **“Give your best,”** Church Newsletter, April 12, 1990.

### Chapter 12: Building on Our Heritage

- 218 **“He drew the crowd on”**: “Triad’s Lolley Among Moderates’ Elite,” *Greensboro News and Record*, August 26, 1990.
- 219 **put their troubles**: “Focus on Missions, Baptist Says,” *Greensboro News and Record*, March 27, 1993.  
**state chapter of CBF**: For a history of the Cooperative Baptist Foundation of North Carolina, see Stephen J. Pressley, *A Decade of New Beginnings: CBFNC and the First Ten Years* (Winston-Salem, NC: CBF of North Carolina, 2004).
- 222 **1995 interview**: *Verbatim*, 4.
- 223 **he made clear**: Letter from W. Randall Lolley to the congregation, January 28, 1996; see also “Nationally Known Minister to Retire” and “First Baptist Pastor Tells Parishioners He’ll Retire,” *Greensboro News and Record*, January 27 and 29, 1996.
- 225 **headline announced**: “First Baptist Calls Young New Pastor,” *Greensboro News and Record*, May 26, 1997.
- 230 **“no longer be identified”**: “First Baptist Breaks from Conservative Convention,” *Greensboro News and Record*, September 17, 2004.  
**“If you want to know”**: “One Less Tie That Binds,” *Greensboro News and Record*, September 24, 2004.  
**Those who did**: “First Baptist Enters New Era,” editorial by Ken Massey, *Greensboro News and Record*, October 4, 2004.

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Scott P. Culclasure (Photo by Gary Thompson)







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